THE CAMBRIDGE BIBLE
FOR SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

THE PSALMS
BOOKS II III

EDITED BY

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GENERAL EDITOR

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36p

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The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

THE BOOK OF

PSALMS.

(XLII—LXXXIX)

London: C. J. CLAY AND SONS,
CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS WAREHOUSE,
AVE MARIA LANE.
Glasgow: 263, ARGYLE STREET.

Leipzig: F. A. BROCKHAUS.
New York: MACMILLAN AND CO.

The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges.

GENERAL EDITOR FOR THE OLD TESTAMENT:—
A. F. KIRKPATRICK, D.D.

THE BOOK OF

PSALMS

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

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BOOKS II AND III

PSALMS XLII—LXXXIX

EDITED FOR THE SYNDICS OF THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.

Cambridge:
AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS.
1895

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CONTENTS.

		PAGES
I.	INTRODUCTION.	
	I. The Book of Psalms	ix—xii
	II. The Position, Names, Numbering, and Divisions of the Psalter	xii—xvii
	III. The Titles of the Psalms.....	xvii—xxxi
	IV. The Authorship and Age of the Psalms ...	xxxi—xxxviii
	V. The Collection and Growth of the Psalter...	xxxix—xliv
	VI. The Form of Hebrew Poetry	xliv—xlviii
	VII. The Hebrew Text, the Ancient Versions, and the English Versions	xlix—lvii
	VIII. The Messianic Hope.....	lviii—lxvii
	IX. On some points in the Theology of the Psalms	lxvii—lxxix
II.	TEXT AND NOTES.....	221—543
III.	APPENDICES	544—549
	INDEX	551—556

*** The Text adopted in this Edition is that of Dr Scrivener's *Cambridge Paragraph Bible*. A few variations from the ordinary Text, chiefly in the spelling of certain words, and in the use of italics, will be noticed. For the principles adopted by Dr Scrivener as regards the printing of the Text see his Introduction to the *Paragraph Bible*, published by the Cambridge University Press.

The choice and flower of all things profitable in other books the Psalms do both more briefly contain, and more movingly also express, by reason of that poetical form wherewith they are written... What is there necessary for man to know which the Psalms are not able to teach? They are to beginners an easy and familiar introduction, a mighty augmentation of all virtue and knowledge in such as are entered before, a strong confirmation to the most perfect among others. Heroical magnanimity, exquisite justice, grave moderation, exact wisdom, repentance unfeigned, unwearied patience, the mysteries of God, the sufferings of Christ, the terrors of wrath, the comforts of grace, the works of Providence over this world, and the promised joys of that world which is to come, all good necessarily to be either known or done or had, this one celestial fountain yieldeth. Let there be any grief or disease incident into the soul of man, any wound or sickness named, for which there is not in this treasure-house a present comfortable remedy at all times ready to be found.

R. HOOKER.

INTRODUCTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS.

LYRIC poetry is the most ancient kind of poetry, and Hebrew poetry is mainly lyric. Neither epic nor dramatic poetry flourished in ancient Israel. Some indeed of the historical Psalms may be said to have an epic colouring, but they belong to the class of didactic narrative: Job and the Song of Songs may be called in a sense dramatic, but they do not appear to have been intended for performance on the stage. The only independent branch of poetry in Israel was Gnomic or Proverbial poetry, which in the hands of the 'Wise Men' attained to a rich development, and must have exercised an important influence on the education of the people.

The Old Testament is the religious history of Israel, and the poetry preserved in the Book of Psalms is, as might be expected, religious poetry. Secular poetry no doubt existed[1], but it has not come down to us. The Psalter then is a collection of religious lyrics. Lyric poetry is defined as "that which directly expresses the individual emotions of the poet;" and religious lyric poetry is the expression of those emotions and feelings as they are stirred by the thought of God and directed God-wards. This is the common characteristic of the Psalms in all their

[1] Such as the drinking songs referred to in Amos vi. 5 (R.V.); Is. v. 12: harvest and vintage songs (Is. xvi. 10, 11; Jer. xlviii. 33): parables (Judg. ix. 8 ff.). Solomon's 'thousand and five songs' were probably of a secular character (1 Kings iv. 32). Poems like Exod. xv and Judg. v are essentially religious.

manifold variety. Some are directly addressed to God, as petition or thanksgiving or praise: some are the communings of the soul with God, expressing its faith, its hope, its love, its needs, its fears, its aspirations, its joys, its triumphs: some celebrate the 'marvellous works' of God in nature and in history: some reflect upon the perplexing problems of life and their relation to the divine government of the world: but God is as it were the sun around which all revolves, and His light and heat illuminate and animate the whole.

The Psalms stand in an intimate relation to the whole of the Old Testament. They are the inspired response of the human heart to God's revelation of Himself, in Law and History and Prophecy and Philosophy.

The Psalmists celebrate *the moral law* as the guide of human conduct; they welcome *the ordinances of worship* and rejoice in the privilege of access to the presence of God in the Temple, as the crowning joy of life.

History supplies its lessons of God's goodness and man's ingratitude. The recollection of the past is a warning for the present, the support of faith in the hour of trial, the ground of comfort in times of calamity.

The Psalms are closely connected with *Prophecy*. The term 'prophesying' is applied to the expression of religious fervour in chant and hymn (1 Sam. x. 10 ff.; xix. 20 ff.: 1 Chr. xxv. 1—3); and David's chief musicians, Heman, Asaph and Jeduthun, are called 'seers' (1 Chr. xxv. 5; 2 Chr. xxix. 30; xxxv. 15). Sacred poetry often rises to prophetic foresight, while prophecy passes into lyric poetry[1]. The passion for truth and righteousness, and the unquenchable belief that Jehovah's moral government of the world is working, surely if slowly, towards a glorious consummation in the establishment of His universal sovereignty, animate and inspire Psalmists not less than Prophets.

Several Psalms reflect the influence of the '*Wisdom*' or religious philosophy of Israel, both in its practical and in its speculative aspects. The moral lessons for every-day life collected in the Book of Proverbs, and the discussion of the

[1] E.g. Is. xii, xxv, xxvi; Hab. iii.

problems of the world in Job and Ecclesiastes, find their echo in the poetry of the Psalter.

The importance of the Psalter for a just appreciation of the history of Israel is obvious. How meagre an idea of the higher religious life of Israel should we derive from the Historical Books apart from the Prophets: how imperfect still would be the picture drawn from the Historical Books and the Prophets without the warmth of colouring added to it by the Psalms. These alone give us a glimpse into the inner religion of the best spirits in the nation, and bear witness to the faith, the love, the devotion of pious souls even under the limitations of the Old Covenant.

Hence it is essential to study the Psalms critically and historically; to endeavour to ascertain their original meaning and to assign them to their proper place in the history and development of revelation; not only in order to give life and reality to the Psalms themselves, and to understand them better; but for the sake of the light which they throw upon the religious history of Israel, and the course of God's dealings with His people.

The inquiry is however one of extreme difficulty. The widest diversity of opinion prevails as to the date and authorship of the Psalms, and we must often be content to acknowledge that a Psalm cannot be assigned to a definite period, still less to a particular author, with any degree of certainty.

But after all, the critical and historical study of the Psalms is but a preliminary to the higher study of their spiritual meaning and their devotional use. The Psalter has been through all the centuries and will ever continue to be the one unique and inexhaustible treasury of devotion for the individual and for the Church. Through its guidance the soul learns to commune with God: it supplies the most fitting language for common worship.

To some it may seem almost a sacrilege to apply the methods of criticism to such a book. It may be disappointing to find that many Psalms once supposed to be David's must be relegated to a far later age; perplexing to find familiar renderings condemned, and long current interpretations abandoned.

But Holy Scripture conveys divine truth through the medium of human language, and it is our duty to investigate to the full the meaning and the force of that language. Criticism is not the enemy but the handmaid of devotion. As we learn to understand more of the original meaning of the Psalms for those who wrote and used them, we shall learn more of their true meaning for ourselves.

But that meaning is not limited to the 'original' sense, if by this is meant only that which the writers could recognise in their own words. Every true poet's words contain far more than he himself at the moment intends. And the words of these inspired poets were so shaped and moulded by the Holy Spirit that they might grow and expand with the growth of revelation, and "gather wealth in the course of ages." The Psalms belong indeed to the Old and not to the New Testament. They are the product of the Jewish and not of the Christian Church. But "the Psalter in its spiritual fulness belongs to no special time;" and the old words are 'fulfilled' in Christ. The Christian Church may, nay must, use them as they are illuminated by the light of the Gospel. And if the saying, "pectus est quod facit theologum[1]," is true of the study of the Bible generally, it is most true of the study of that book which has well been called "the Bible within the Bible," the very "heart of the Bible."

CHAPTER II.

THE POSITION, NAMES, NUMBERING, AND DIVISIONS OF THE PSALTER.

1. *The position of the Psalter in the Old Testament.* The Hebrew title of the Old Testament indicates the three great divisions, in which, from very early times[2], the Canonical

[1] "It is the heart which makes the theologian."

[2] This triple division is recognised in the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus, written about B.C. 132 by the author's grandson, who translated the book from Hebrew into Greek. "Whereas many and great things have been delivered unto us by means of (διὰ) the law and the prophets and the others that have followed after them ..... my grand-

Books were arranged by the Jewish Church:—*Law*, *Prophets*, *Writings*. The Book of Psalms belongs to the third of these divisions, the *Writings* or *Hagiographa*. But its position in the group has not always been the same. In the MSS. of the German type, which our printed editions follow, the Psalms stand first, followed by Proverbs and Job. That this was the ancient order is at least a probable inference from Luke xxiv. 44 where "the Psalms" stands by the side of "the Law" and "the Prophets" as the title of the Hagiographa in general[1].

The order of the books of the O. T. in our English Bibles is that which had come to be adopted in the Vulgate by the sixteenth century. It corresponds more nearly to the arrangement of the LXX found in the Vatican MS. than to that of the Hebrew, but differs from it in placing Job before the Psalter instead of after the Song of Songs, and in placing the Minor Prophets after instead of before the Major Prophets, and arranging them as they stand in the Hebrew text.

2. *Names of the Psalter.* The Septuagint translators employed the word ψαλμός[2], *psalm*, to render the Heb. word *mizmor*, which was the technical term for a song with musical accompaniment (p. xvii). The collection was styled simply *Psalms*, as in the Vatican MS. (ψαλμοί, cp. Luke xxiv. 44), or *the Book of Psalms* (Luke xx. 42), or in later times the *Psalter*,

father Jesus, when he had diligently given himself to the reading of the law and the prophets and the other books of our fathers (τῶν ἄλλων πατρίων βιβλίων) . . . was drawn on also himself to write something pertaining to instruction and wisdom." And again, apologising for the imperfections of his version, he says: "For words spoken in Hebrew have not precisely the same force, when they are translated into another tongue: and not only this treatise, but even the law and the prophecies and the rest of the books (τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν βιβλίων) differ in no small degree when they are spoken in their own language." The clear distinction which is here drawn between the Canonical books and Ecclesiasticus, and the reference to the Greek Version of the O.T. as already in existence, should be carefully noticed.

[1] Comp. too Philo (B.C. 20—A.D. 50) *de vita contempl.* (ii. 475): νόμους καὶ λόγια θεσπισθέντα διὰ προφητῶν καὶ ὕμνους καὶ τὰ ἄλλα οἷς ἐπιστήμη καὶ εὐσέβεια συναύξονται καὶ τελειοῦνται. "Laws and oracles delivered by prophets and hymns and the other writings by which knowledge and piety are increased and perfected."

[2] ψαλμός denotes (1) the music of a stringed instrument; (2) a song sung to the accompaniment of such music.

ψαλτήρ or ψαλτήριον[1]. The Greek words have come down to us through the Latin *psalmus*, *psalterium*.

The title of the collection in the Hebrew Bible is *Book of Praises* or simply *Praises: Sepher Tehillim* abbreviated into *Tillim* or *Tillin*[2]. This title was known to Hippolytus[3] and Origen[4] in the first half of the third century A.D., and to Jerome[5]. Only one Psalm (cxlv) bears the title *A Praise*, and the name *Book of Praises* probably originated in the use of the collection as the hymn-book of the Second Temple[6]. But no more fitting name could be found for a book, of which a predominant characteristic is praise and thanksgiving, and which ends with a diapason of Hallelujahs.

Another title, possibly that of the earliest collection of Davidic Psalms, was *Tephilloth* or *Prayers* (lxxii. 20). Only five Psalms, xvii, lxxxvi, xc, cii, cxlii, are so entitled; but again, although some Psalms (e.g. i, ii) contain no direct address to God, the title is a suitable one. Prayer in its widest sense includes all elevation of the mind to God[7]. Hannah's thanksgiving and Habakkuk's ode are both described as prayer (1 Sam. ii. 1, Hab. iii. 1).

3. *Numbering of the Psalms.* The Massoretic Text and the LXX both reckon a total of 150 Psalms. The 151st Psalm, which is added in the LXX, is expressly said to be "outside

[1] ψαλτήριον meant originally a *stringed instrument*, a *psaltery* (frequently in the LXX), and was afterwards applied to a *collection of psalms*, a *psalter*. In this sense it is used by Hippolytus, Athanasius, Epiphanius, and stands as the title of the Psalms in the Alexandrine MS.

[2] The word is derived from the same root as *Hallelujah*, and the verb is frequently used in connexion with the Temple Service (1 Chron. xvi. 4 &c.).

[3] p. 188, ed. Lagarde. Ἑβραῖοι περιέγραψαν τὴν βίβλον Σέφρα θελείμ. The genuineness of the fragment of Hippolytus which treats of the inscriptions, authorship, divisions, and order of the Psalms, is however doubtful. See Dr Salmon in the *Dict. of Christian Biography*, iii. 103.

[4] In Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 25 (ed. Burton) Σφαρθελλείμ.

[5] In the Preface to his *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos* (p. 2, ed. Lagarde): "titulus ipse Hebraicus *sephar tallim*, quod interpretatur *volumen hymnorum*."

[6] Cp. Neh. xii. 46.

[7] "Lege totum Psalterium...nihil erit nisi ad Deum in cunctis operibus deprecatio." S. Jerome *contra Pelag.* i. 5.

the number[1]." But this reckoning has not been uniformly observed. Some ancient Jewish authorities reckon 149, others 147 Psalms, the latter number, as the Jerusalem Talmud says, "according to the years of our father Jacob." These totals are obtained by uniting one or all of the pairs i, ii: ix, x: cxiv, cxv. Although the Hebrew and the LXX agree in the total, they differ in the details of the numeration. The LXX unites ix and x, cxiv and cxv, and divides cxvi and cxlvii. It may be useful to subjoin a comparative table, for while our modern English versions follow the Hebrew reckoning, the Vulgate and the older English Versions (e.g. Wycliffe and Coverdale) and modern Roman Catholic versions based upon it, follow that of the LXX.

Hebrew (Later English Versions).		LXX (Vulgate. Older English Versions. Rom. Cath. Versions).
i—viii.	=	i—viii.
ix, x.	=	ix.
xi—cxiii.	=	x—cxii.
cxiv, cxv.	=	cxiii.
cxvi.	=	cxiv, cxv.
cxvii—cxlvi.	=	cxvi—cxlv.
cxlvii.	=	cxlvi, cxlvii.
cxlviii—cl.	=	cxlviii—cl.

[1] This Psalm appears to have been translated from a Hebrew original, but the contrast between it and the canonical Psalms is so noteworthy that it seems worth while to append a version of it.

"This Psalm was written by David with his own hand (and it is outside the number) when he fought in single combat with Goliath.

1. I was little among my brethren,
   and the youngest in my father's house;
   I fed my father's sheep.
2. My hands made a harp,
   my fingers contrived a psaltery.
3. And who will declare unto my Lord?
   He is the Lord, it is He that heareth.
4. He sent His angel,
   and took me from my father's sheep,
   and anointed me with the oil of his anointing.
5. My brethren were comely and tall,
   and in them the Lord had no pleasure.
6. I went forth to meet the Philistine,
   and he cursed me by his idols.
7. But I drew the sword from his side, and beheaded him,
   and took away the reproach from the children of Israel."

Thus for the greater part of the Psalter the numeration of the LXX is one behind that of the Hebrew.

The English reader should also remember that the title of a Psalm, when it consists of more than one or two words, is reckoned as a verse, and sometimes (e.g. in Ps. li) as two verses, in the Hebrew text. Attention to this is necessary in using the references of commentaries, which like that of Delitzsch, follow the numbering of the verses in the original.

4. *Divisions of the Psalter.* The Psalter has from ancient times been divided into five books:

Book i = Pss. i—xli:
„ ii = Pss. xlii—lxxii:
„ iii = Pss. lxxiii—lxxxix:
„ iv = Pss. xc—cvi:
„ v = Pss. cvii—cl.

These divisions are indicated not merely by headings in the Massoretic text, which have been introduced into the Revised Version, but by doxologies at the close of the first four books (xli. 13, lxxii. 18, 19, lxxxix. 52, cvi. 48), which obviously form no part of the Psalms to which they are appended. No special doxology is added to Ps. cl. It is in itself an appropriate concluding doxology for the whole Psalter.

This five-fold division is earlier than the LXX, which contains the doxologies. It is often referred to by Jewish and Christian authorities, and compared to the five books of the Pentateuch.

Thus the *Midrash*[1] on Ps. i. 1: "Moses gave the Israelites the five books of the Law, and to correspond to these David gave them the Book of Psalms containing five books."

Hippolytus [?] (ed. Lagarde, p. 193): "Let it not escape your notice...that the Hebrews divided the Psalter also into five books, that it might be a second Pentateuch."

Jerome, in the *Prologus Galeatus:* "Tertius ordo Hagiographa possidet. Et primus liber incipit a Job. Secundus a

[1] An ancient Jewish commentary, probably however in its present form not earlier than the 10th century A.D. But older Jewish authorities recognise the division. See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, p. 195.

David, quem quinque incisionibus (*sections*) et uno Psalmorum volumine comprehendunt." No doubt he chose this form of expression carefully, for in his preface to the Psalter he somewhat passionately affirms the unity of the Book.

The division is referred to by most of the Fathers, some of whom, as Ambrose, explain it allegorically; others, as Gregory of Nyssa, find in the several books so many steps rising to moral perfection. As will be shewn presently, the division of the books in part corresponds to older collections out of which the Psalter was formed, in part is purely artificial.

CHAPTER III.

THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS.

To nearly all the Psalms in the first three Books, and to some of those in the fourth and fifth Books, are prefixed titles, designating either (1) the character of the poem, or (2) matters connected with its musical setting, or (3) its liturgical use, or (4) the author, or perhaps more strictly, the collection from which the Psalm was taken, or (5) the historical occasion for which it was written or which it illustrates.

Such titles may occur separately or in combination. Many of them are extremely obscure, and their meanings can only be conjectured. All that will be attempted here is to give the most probable explanations. An elaborate discussion of the innumerable interpretations which have been proposed would be mere waste of time. Some special titles which occur but once will be discussed in the introduction to the Psalms to which they belong.

1. *Titles descriptive of the character of the poem.*

Psalm[1]. *Mizmōr*, rendered *Psalm*, is a technical term found only in the titles of the Psalter. It is prefixed to 57 Psalms, and with few exceptions, preceded or followed by the name of the author, generally that of David. The verb from which *Mizmōr* is derived occurs frequently in the Psalter (e.g. vii. 17, xlvii. 6, 7, cxlix. 3) but rarely elsewhere

[1] מִזְמוֹר: LXX ψαλμός: Vulg. *Psalmus*.

(Judg. v. 3; [2 Sam. xxii. 50; 1 Chr. xvi. 9]; Is. xii. 5). It appears originally to have meant *to make music*, like the Lat. *canere*, but came to be applied specially to instrumental music, as distinguished from vocal music. *Mizmōr* then means *a piece of music*, a song with instrumental accompaniment.

Song[1]. *Shīr*, rendered *song*, is the general term for a song or canticle. It occurs 30 times in the titles, generally preceded or followed by *Mizmōr*, and not unfrequently in the text of the Psalms (e.g. xxviii. 7, xl. 3, cxxxvii. 3, 4), and in other books. It is applied to secular as well as sacred songs (Gen. xxxi. 27; Jud. v. 12; 1 Kings iv. 32; Is. xxx. 29; Neh. xii. 27, 36, 46).

Maschīl[2] is found as the title of thirteen[3] Psalms, eleven of which are in Books ii and iii. The meaning is obscure. (*a*) It has been explained to mean *a didactic psalm*. Comp. the use of the cognate verb in xxxii. 8, 'I will instruct thee.' But of the Psalms which bear the title only xxxii and lxxviii are specifically 'didactic.' (*b*) Delitzsch supposes it to mean *a meditation*. (*c*) Most probable however is Ewald's explanation, *a skilful psalm*. The word is used in Ps. xlvii. 7, 'sing ye praises *with understanding*' (Heb. *maschīl*), R.V. marg., *in a skilful psalm*. It may have denoted something more definite than the ordinary *Mizmōr*, a psalm with musical setting of a specially delicate and artistic character.

Michtam occurs in the title of six Psalms, preceded or followed by *of David*[4]. It is probably, like *Maschīl*, a musical term, the meaning of which cannot now be determined. A few of the many explanations which have been given may be mentioned: (1) That of the LXX and Theodotion, στηλογραφία or εἰς στηλογραφίαν, *an inscription* or *for an inscription*. Cp. the Targ. *an excellent inscription* or *writing*. Hence Delitzsch explains, *a*

[1] שִׁיר: LXX in titles usually ᾠδή, in text ᾠδή or ᾆσμα.

[2] מַשְׂכִּיל: LXX συνέσεως or εἰς σύνεσιν: Vulg. *intellectus* or *ad intellectum*: Jer. *eruditio*.

[3] xxxii. xlii. xliv. xlv. lii. liii. liv. lv. lxxiv. lxxviii. lxxxviii. lxxxix. cxlii.

[4] xvi. lvi—lx.

poem of epigrammatic character, containing pithy or expressive sayings. (2) In defiance of all grammar and analogy Aquila Symmachus and Jerome render the word as an epithet of David, *the humble and sincere* or *blameless*. (3) *A golden Psalm* (A.V. marg.), with reference to the preciousness of its contents, like the *golden sayings* (χρυσᾶ ἔπη) of Pythagoras. (4) An unpublished poem. (5) A Psalm of hidden, mysterious meaning.

Shiggaion[1] occurs in the title of Ps. vii, and the Prayer of Habakkuk is said to be *set to Shigionoth*. The word is derived from a verb which means *to wander*, and it probably denotes a particular style of poetry or music, or it may include both, and mean 'a dithyrambic poem in wild ecstatic wandering rhythms, with corresponding music.'

A Prayer stands as the title of five Psalms (xvii. lxxxvi. xc. cii. cxlii). Cp. lxxii. 20; 1 Sam. ii. 1; Hab. iii. 1.

A Praise is the title of one Psalm only (cxlv).

2. *Titles connected with the musical setting or performance.*

To the chief Musician[2]: R.V. **For the Chief Musician:** is prefixed to fifty-five Psalms, of which only two (lxvi, lxvii) are anonymous, and most bear the name of David. Fifty-two of these are in Books I—III, and three in Book V. It is found also in the subscription to Habakkuk's Prayer (Hab. iii. 19). The verb, of which the word is a participle, is used in Chronicles and Ezra in the sense of *superintending* (1 Chr. xxiii. 4; 2 Chr. xxxiv. 12; Ezra iii. 8, 9), and in 1 Chr. xv. 21 in the

[1] שִׁגָּיוֹן plur. שִׁגְיוֹנוֹת: LXX in Ps. vii simply ψαλμός, in Hab. μετὰ ᾠδῆς. Jer. *ignoratio*, following Symm. ἀγνόημα. Aq. ψ. ὑπὲρ ἀγνοίας, supposing it to refer to the contents of the Psalm.

[2] לַמְנַצֵּחַ (*lam'naççēach*). The Targum renders it *for praise*, giving the general sense. But the other Ancient Versions were completely at a loss. The LXX renders εἰς τὸ τέλος, Vulg. *in finem*, 'unto the end' or 'for ever,' confusing the word with לָנֶצַח (*lāneçach*). The other Greek Versions and Jerome connected it with the sense of *victory*, which is one of the meanings of the root. Thus Aquila τῷ νικοποιῷ, 'for the victor.' Symmachus, ἐπινίκιος, 'a song of victory:' Theodotion, εἰς τὸ νῖκος, 'for the victory:' Jerome, *victori*. So too the LXX in Hab. iii. 19, τοῦ νικῆσαι. These renderings gave the ingenuity of the Fathers great opportunities for allegorical interpretations.

specific sense of *leading* (R.V.) the music. There can be little doubt that the word means the *precentor*, or *conductor* of the Temple choir, who trained the choir and led the music, and denotes the destination of the Psalm for use in the Temple Services. Why it appears so rarely in the later books, where the Psalms are mainly of a liturgical character, must remain matter of conjecture. The explanation commonly given, that it was unnecessary, because the destination of these Psalms was obvious, is hardly satisfactory. Many of the Psalms in Books I—III which have it prefixed to them, are clearly intended for public use. Possibly it was a term belonging to the older collections, which had gone out of use in later times. Certainly the translators of the LXX had lost all clue to its meaning.

Selah. This term, though not belonging to the titles, may conveniently be discussed here.

The word is found 71 times in the Psalter, 3 times in Habakkuk iii, and nowhere else. In 16 Psalms it occurs once; in 15 twice; in 7 (and in Hab. iii) three times: in one, four times. Of these Psalms 9 are in Book I: 17 in Book II: 11 in Book III; none in Book IV: 2 only in Book V. It is to be further noted that all these Psalms, with the exception of the anonymous lxvi and lxvii, bear the name of David or of the Levitical singers (the sons of Korah, Asaph, Heman, Ethan); and all bear indications of being intended to be set to music. The majority of them (28 of the 39: cp. Hab. iii. 19) have, 'For the Chief Musician' in the title, frequently with a further specification of the instruments or melody (iv. ix. xlvi. liv. lv. lvii. lix. lx. lxi. lxii. lxvii. lxxv. lxxvi. lxxvii. lxxxi. lxxxiv. lxxxviii. Hab. iii. 19). Of the remaining eleven, eight are designated *mizmōr*, 'psalm', two *maschīl*, and one *shiggaion*.

It may fairly be inferred from these facts that Selah is a technical term of great antiquity, having reference to musical accompaniment. Its precise meaning, however, is quite uncertain. There are two main lines of ancient tradition:

(*a*) By the LXX always, and by Symmachus and Theodotion generally, it is rendered διάψαλμα[1] (*diapsalma*), which may

[1] The word is also found twice in the Psalms of Solomon (xvii. 31; xviii. 10).

denote either louder playing, *forte;* or, more probably, *an instrumental interlude*[1], while the singing ceased. The Syriac (with a few exceptions) gives an abbreviation of the Greek word. The Vulgate omits it entirely.

(*b*) The most ancient Jewish traditions interpret the word to mean *for ever.* So the Targum, with some variety of rendering, Aquila, the 'Fifth' and 'Sixth' Greek versions, Symmachus, Theodotion, and the Syriac occasionally; and Jerome, who renders *semper*[2].

Of these ancient renderings, that of the LXX probably preserves a true tradition as to the usage of *Selah:* but the meaning 'always' is based on no known etymology, and is obviously unsuitable in the majority of passages.

Of the multitude of modern explanations only the most reasonable and most generally accepted need be mentioned here. According to this explanation *Selah* is derived from a root meaning *to raise*, and signifies 'Up!'

It is then a direction to the musicians to strike up, either with a louder accompaniment, or with an interlude while the singing ceased. This explanation is supported by the conjunction of *Selah* in Ps. ix. 16 with *Higgaion*, a term used of instrumental music (Ps. xcii. 3, 'a solemn sound'). It is moreover confirmed by an examination of the passages in which *Selah* occurs. In the majority of cases it is found at the end of a strophe, or before the introduction of some fresh thought, where an interlude would be most natural (Ps. iii. 2, 4, 8; xxiv. 6, 10; xliv. 8; xlvi. 3, 7, 11; lxvi. 4, 7, 15); or before some appeal or utterance which would be distinguished from what preceded and emphasised by an interlude or by a stronger accompaniment (Ps. vii. 5; l. 6; lx. 4; lxxv. 3; lxxxi. 7; lxxxiii. 8). There

[1] Cp. διαύλιον, an interlude on the flute.

[2] For an interesting account of the various opinions held in his day consult his letter to Marcella (Opp. i. col. 135, ed. Vallarsi). He decides in favour of the rendering *semper*, 'always,' because it is that given by Aquila, 'the most careful interpreter of the meanings of Hebrew words,' and says that it is designed 'to connect what precedes with what follows, or to shew that what has been said is everlasting': and compares the use of the word with that of *Amen* or *Shalom* (peace), to mark the end of a passage, and confirm its contents.

are no doubt many instances which do not appear to come under these general principles; but the Hebrew idea of what was fitting by way of accompaniment may have differed from ours; and in some cases the accuracy of the Massoretic Text is doubtful. The Septuagint does not always agree with it in the insertion or omission of *Selah*, and an obscure technical term would be specially liable to be omitted or wrongly inserted.

Two terms refer to *musical instruments*.

On Negīnōth[1]: R.V. **on stringed instruments**: occurs six times in the Psalter[2]: and in Hab. iii. 19 we find *on my stringed instruments*. **Upon Neginah**: R.V. **on a stringed instrument** (lxi): may be a variation of the expression, or may indicate the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung[3]. The word is derived from a verb meaning *to play on stringed instruments* (1 Sam. xvi. 16—18, 23). The meaning *stringed instruments* is peculiar to these titles: elsewhere it denotes *song* (Job xxx. 9; Ps. lxxvii. 6; Is. xxxviii. 20). The title no doubt indicates that the Psalm was to be accompanied by stringed instruments, perhaps by these only.

Upon Nehīlōth[4]: R.V. **with the Nehiloth,** or (marg.) *wind instruments:* in Ps. v only. Probably *flutes* of some kind are meant. For the use of these in sacred music see Is. xxx. 29 (*a pipe*): 1 Sam. x. 5; 1 Kings i. 40.

Two terms probably indicate the *character* or *pitch* of the music.

Upon Alāmōth[5]: R.V. **set to A.**: is found in the title of Ps.

[1] בִּנְגִינוֹת: LXX. *ἐν ψαλμοῖς* (iv): *ἐν ὕμνοις* generally: in Hab. *ἐν τῇ ᾠδῇ αὐτοῦ*: Vulg. *in carminibus:* Jer. *in psalmis.* Symm. *διὰ ψαλτηρίων.*

[2] Pss. iv. vi. liv. lv. lxvii. lxxvi.

[3] The Heb. is עַל נְגִינַת which may mean *set to neginath*, or, *the song of...:* some word of definition being lost.

[4] אֶל הַנְּחִילוֹת. The Greek and Latin versions are quite astray, referring the word to the contents of the Psalm. The LXX and Theodotion: *ὑπὲρ τῆς κληρονομούσης*: Vulg. *pro ea quae hereditatem consequitur.* Aq. *ἀπὸ (?) κληροδοσιῶν*: Symm. *ὑπὲρ κληρουχιῶν*: Jer. *super hereditatibus.*

[5] The ancient Versions were again at fault. The LXX renders: *ὑπὲρ*

xlvi, and may possibly once have stood in the title of Ps. ix, and as a subscription to Ps. xlviii, or in the title of Ps. xlix. See the notes there. The term appears to mean *in the manner of maidens*, or, *for maidens' voices: soprano.*

Upon Shemīnīth[1]: R.V. **set to the S.**, i.e. as marg., *the eighth* (Pss. vi and xii): probably denotes that the setting was to be an octave lower, or, on the lower octave; *tenor* or *bass.* Both terms occur together in 1 Chr. xv. 19—21. Heman, Asaph, and Jeduthun were appointed "with cymbals of brass to sound aloud": eight other Levites, "with psalteries set to Alamoth"; and six "with harps set to the Sheminith, to lead."

Upon Gittith[2]: R.V. **set to the Gittith**: occurs in the titles of Pss. viii, lxxxi, lxxxiv. In form *Gittith* is a fem. adj. derived from *Gath*, and may mean either (1) some Gittite instrument: so the Targ. 'the harp which David brought from Gath': or (2) a Gittite melody; possibly, as has been conjectured, the march of the Gittite guard (2 Sam. xv. 18).

To Jeduthun[3]: R.V. **after the manner of J.** (lxii, lxxvii): probably means that the Psalm was set to some melody composed by or called after David's chief musician (1 Chr. xvi. 41). In the title of Ps. xxxix Jeduthun appears to be named as the chief musician intended.

A series of obscure titles probably indicate the *melody* to which the Psalm was to be sung by a reference to the opening words of some well-known song. Such are the titles of

Ps. ix: **set to Muth-labben** (R.V.).

Ps. xxii: **set to Ayyéleth hash-Shahar**, i.e. *the hind of the morning.*

τῶν κρυφίων: Vulg. *pro occultis:* Symm. ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰωνίων: Aq. ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων: and so Jer. *pro iuventutibus.*

[1] עַל הַשְּׁמִינִית. The LXX literally ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀγδόης: Vulg. *pro octava.* Both terms are allegorically explained by the Fathers, of the mysteries of the faith, the octave of eternity, &c. &c.

[2] עַל הַגִּתִּית. The LXX and Symm. have ὑπὲρ τῶν ληνῶν: Vulg. and Jer. *pro torcularibus*, 'for the wine-presses', reading גִּתּוֹת for גִּתִּית. Hence some have explained the title, 'set to the melody of a vintage song.' Aq. and Symm. render the Massoretic text: ὑπὲρ τῆς γεθ-τιδος.

[3] עַל יְדוּתוּן.

Pss. xlv, lxix: **set to Shoshannim** (R.V.), i.e. *Lilies.* Ps. lx: **set to Shushan Eduth** (R.V.), i.e. *The lily of testimony.* Ps. lxxx: **set to Shoshannim Eduth** (R.V.), i.e. *Lilies, a testimony.*

Ps. lvi: **set to Yonath elem rechōkīm,** i.e. *The silent dove of them that are afar off:* or, as read with different vowels, *The dove of the distant terebinths.*

Four Psalms (lvii—lix, lxxv) are entitled, **[set to] Al-tashcheth** i.e. *Destroy not.*

The titles of Ps. liii: **set to Mahalath**: and lxxxviii: **set to Mahalath Leannōth**: are extremely obscure, but probably belong to this class.

For further details see the notes in each case.

3. A few titles refer to *the liturgical use of the Psalm.* In the time of the Second Temple, each day of the week had its special Psalm, which was sung at the offering of the morning sacrifice[1]. Thus Ps. xcii is entitled "A Psalm, a Song **for the Sabbath day.**" This is the only reference to the daily psalms in the Heb. text: but in the LXX, Ps. xxiv is assigned to the first day of the week (*τῆς μιᾶς σαββάτων*); Ps. xlviii to the second day (*δευτέρᾳ σαββάτου*); Ps. xciv to the fourth day (*τετράδι σαββάτων*); Ps. xciii to the sixth day of the week, "when the earth had been filled with inhabitants" (*εἰς τὴν ἡμέραν τοῦ προσαββάτου, ὅτε κατῴκισται ἡ γῆ*). The Old Latin Version further refers Ps. lxxxi to the fifth day (*quinta sabbati*). These titles agree with the arrangement given in the Mishna (*Tamid*, vii. 3), according to which the Psalm for the third day was Ps. lxxxii.

The title of Pss. xxxviii and lxx **to bring to remembrance,** or, as R.V. marg., **to make memorial,** may indicate that they were sung at the offering of incense: and that of Ps. c, **A Psalm of thanksgiving** (R.V.), marg. *for the thank-offering*, may mark that it was sung when thank-offerings (lvi. 12) were offered.

The title of Ps. xxx, **A Song at the Dedication of the House,** may refer to its use at the Festival of the Dedication.

To teach is part of the title prefixed to Ps. lx. A comparison of Deut. xxxi. 19 and 2 Sam. i. 18 makes it probable that it was to be learnt by heart and recited on public occasions.

[1] Cp. Ecclus. l. 14 ff. for a description of the service.

On these titles see further in the notes on the particular Psalms.

A song of Degrees, rather, **A Song of the Ascents** (or, **of the Going up**), is the title prefixed to 15 Psalms (cxx—cxxxiv), which appear to have formed a separate collection, bearing the title *Songs of the Goings up* (or, *of the Going up*), which was afterwards transferred to each separate Psalm.

Various explanations of this title have been proposed.

(1) The LXX renders, ᾠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν: Vulg. and Jer., *canticum graduum*, 'a song of steps.' It has been supposed that they were so called because they were sung upon the flight of 15 steps which led from the Court of the Women to the Court of the Men in the Second Temple. But Delitzsch has shewn that the passage of the Talmud quoted in support of this explanation really says nothing at all about the singing of these Psalms upon the steps, or the derivation of the name from them, but merely compares the number of the Psalms with that of the steps.

(2) An explanation which has found considerable favour in modern times regards the term as denoting a particular kind of 'ascending' structure, in which each verse takes up and repeats a word or clause from the preceding verse. Ps. cxxi offers a good example of this structure; but apart from the fact that no trace can be found of this technical meaning of the word '*ascent*' elsewhere, the structure is neither peculiar to these Psalms nor characteristic of all of them.

(3) As 'the ascent' or 'going up' was the regular term for the Return from Babylon (Ezra vii. 9), some have supposed that these psalms were sung by the returning exiles on their march. So the Syriac Version, and probably Aq. Symm. and Theod., who render ᾄσμα τῶν ἀναβάσεων or εἰς τὰς ἀναβάσεις. But the contents of many of the Psalms do not favour this explanation.

(4) 'To go up' was the regular term for making pilgrimage to Jerusalem at the great festivals (1 Sam. i. 3; Ps. cxxii. 4). 'The songs of the goings up' may have been the name for those which were sung on these occasions. We know that the pilgrims went up with singing (Is. xxx. 29; Ps. xlii. 4), and many of these

Psalms are well suited for such occasions[1]; while others, though not so obviously appropriate, might well have been employed for the purpose. This is on the whole the most probable explanation, although the substantive 'going up' is not used elsewhere in this technical sense.

4. *Titles relating to Authorship.* These are regularly introduced by a preposition denoting *of* or *belonging to*, the so-called '*lamed* auctoris.'

(*a*) One Psalm (xc) bears the name of **Moses.**

(*b*) 73 Psalms bear the name of **David:** viz. all those in Book I, except i and ii, which are prefatory; x, which is part of ix; and xxxiii, which appears to be a later addition: 18 in Book II. (li—lxv, lxviii—lxx); one in Book III. (lxxxvi); two in Book IV. (ci, ciii); 15 in Book V. (cviii—cx, cxxii, cxxiv, cxxxi, cxxxiii, cxxxviii—cxlv).

(*c*) Two (lxxii, cxxvii) bear the name of **Solomon.**

(*a*) 12 (l, lxxiii—lxxxiii) bear the name of **Asaph,** one of David's principal musicians (1 Chr. vi. 39, xv. 17, xvi. 5 ff.; 2 Chr. v. 12).

(*e*) To **the sons of Korah** are attributed 10 or 11: xlii [xliii], xliv—xlix. lxxxiv. lxxxv. lxxxvii. lxxxviii. [?], for according to analogy the title is to be rendered as in R.V., **of the sons of K.**; not, as in A.V., *for the sons of K.*

(*f*) The sages **Heman the Ezrachite** and **Ethan the Ezrachite** (1 Kings iv. 31) have each a psalm attributed to them (lxxxviii, lxxxix).

5. *Titles describing the occasion of the Psalm* are prefixed to 13 psalms, all of which bear the name of David. Pss. vii. lix. lvi. xxxiv. lii. lvii. cxlii. liv. are referred to the period of his persecution by Saul: xviii to the climax of his reign; Ps. lx to the Syro-Ammonite war; Ps. li to his fall; Pss. iii and lxiii to his flight from Absalom.

The Value of the Titles. We have now to inquire whether these titles give any authentic information, or must be regarded as late additions, largely, if not wholly, untrustworthy.

(i) With regard to the *musical titles* it is often asserted that

[1] E.g. cxxi—cxxiii. cxxv. cxxvii. cxxviii. cxxxii—cxxxiv.

they represent the usages of the Second Temple, and were added by some post-exilic editor. This may be true of some; but as a general statement it is hardly justified by the evidence.

(1) Although, as might be expected, light is thrown upon them by the description of David's musical services in 1 Chron., it is by no means the case that they are merely borrowed from that book. Many of them are not to be found there.

(2) We have positive evidence for the use of titles and terms of the kind in pre-exilic times from Hab. iii. 1, 19.

(3) It is precisely in the later Psalms which bear every appearance of being intended for the Temple worship, that the musical titles and terms are rare or entirely wanting.

(4) The Septuagint translators found them in the text, but were unable to understand even their general purport. This may possibly have been due to ignorance of the technical terms of Palestinian music in Egypt, and in any case only indicates a relatively high antiquity, but it must be taken into account.

The most natural inference from these considerations appears to be that while the liturgical titles belong to the services of the Second Temple, and may in some cases (e.g. Ps. xxx) have been added at a very late date, the musical titles may very probably be referred to the period before the exile. After the Return they ceased to be used, and in the second century B.C. they were no longer intelligible.

(ii) We may now proceed to consider the titles relating to *authorship and occasion.* It is frequently asserted that these must be neglected as wholly untrustworthy for reasons such as the following:

(1) The variations found in MSS. and Versions shew that they were not regarded as an integral part of the text, but were liable to alteration by the transcribers, like the titles of the books of the N. T., or the subscriptions to the Pauline Epistles.

(2) The fact that only Moses, David, Solomon, and David's singers are mentioned is supposed to be due to the tendency of tradition to connect everything with famous names.

(3) It is thought strange that none of the prophets, in particular Jeremiah, whose writings so remarkably resemble many of the Psalms, are mentioned.

(4) The historical notices are almost all taken from the Books of Samuel, and are in most cases inappropriate.

(5) Many of the titles are demonstrated to be erroneous by the contents and language of the Psalms to which they are prefixed. Many Psalms ascribed to David assume situations and circumstances wholly unlike any in which he can be supposed to have been placed: some (e.g. lxix. ciii) refer to the destruction of Jerusalem: the language of others (e.g. cxxxix) is unquestionably late: some (e.g. lxxxvi) are mere compilations.

On these and similar grounds modern critics are disposed to reject the titles entirely. But while it is clear that in many cases the titles cannot be right, much may be said in favour of allowing them a certain significance and a relative authority.

(1) The titles are not to be peremptorily condemned as a whole, because MSS. and Versions do not unanimously support some of them[1]. The text itself was liable to alteration in early times, but it is not therefore to be suspected where the documentary evidence is unanimous, unless the strongest internal evidence points to an error anterior to our existing authorities.

(2) Titles of a similar kind are prefixed to poems found elsewhere in the O. T., e.g. Ex. xv. 1: 1 Sam. ii. 1; 2 Sam. i. 17, 18, xxii. 1, xxiii. 1; Is. xxxviii. 9; Hab. iii. 1. These are no doubt due in many cases to the compilers of the books in which they are found, but they are evidence for the antiquity of the custom of prefixing titles to poems.

(3) The infrequency of titles in the later books (iv, v) is at least an indication that they were not an arbitrary addition of

[1] The extent of the variations may easily be exaggerated. A few Heb. MSS. assign lxvi. lxvii. to David. In the LXX David's name is prefixed to xxxiii. xliii. lxvii. lxxi. xci. xciii—xcix. civ. cxxxvii. Historical notices are added to xxvii. xciii. xcvi. xcvii. cxliii. cxliv. Jeremiah's name (as well as David's) is prefixed to cxxxvii in some MSS (not Aℵ), and the names of Haggai and Zechariah to cxxxviii (not in ℵ, in A *Zechariah* only), cxlvi—cxlviii. In cxxii. cxxiv. cod. ℵ, and in cxxxi. cxxxiii. codd. A and ℵ agree with the Heb. text in retaining *David*, though it is omitted by the ordinary editions. In cxxvii *Solomon* is omitted in the best MSS.

the latest compilers of the Psalter, but rested on some authority, documentary or traditional.

(4) Some at any rate of the titles, e.g. those of vii and lx, are not derived from the historical books now extant, but from some independent source.

It appears then that while on the one hand the titles cannot be regarded as in all cases giving certain and trustworthy information concerning the authorship of the Psalms, on the other hand they are not to be one and all peremptorily rejected as purely arbitrary and conjectural.

What then is their value? It seems probable that they indicate the source from which the Psalms were derived rather than the opinion of the collector as to their authorship.

In regard to the Psalms of the Sons of Korah this is clearly the case. The title *A Psalm of the Sons of Korah* cannot mean that the Psalm was composed by a plurality of authors. It must be part of the title of the collection from which these Psalms were derived. Such a collection may have been called, "*The Book of the Songs of the Sons of Korah*," and have contained Psalms written by members of the guild or family of Korah and preserved in a collection, made probably for liturgical purposes, which bore their name.

Similarly the title, "A Psalm of David," may have been derived from the general title of the collection from which the Psalms in question were taken :—"*The Book of the Prayers of David.*" The collection may have been so named from its most eminent poet, although the works of other poets were subsequently added to it. Just as in later times the whole Psalter came to be spoken of as the Psalms of David, from its founder and principal author, so in earlier times the smaller collection of which only the origin and nucleus was due to David, came to bear his name, and when that collection was incorporated in the Psalter, his name was placed at the head of each Psalm taken from it[1].

The compiler of the Second Book may also have taken the Davidic Psalms which it contains from some earlier collection,

[1] We commonly speak of Newman's *Lyra Apostolica*, though five other writers contributed to it.

possibly a historical work in which many of them were connected with particular episodes in the life of David. The earlier histories were often illustrated by the insertion of poems, e.g. Judg. v: 1 Sam. ii: 2 Sam. xxii.

Even the compilers of Books IV and V may have found the Psalms which are there attributed to David in some earlier collection bearing his name, or assigned to him by current tradition.

Further it is quite possible that imitations of Davidic Psalms, such for example as Ps. lxxxvi, may have been called by his name, without the slightest intention of fraud. In 1 Chr. xvi we find a Psalm compiled from other Psalms suggested as an appropriate thanksgiving for the occasion, though it does not appear to be expressly attributed to David[1].

Again, it is possible that Psalms were written by different poets to illustrate particular episodes in the life of David, or to express the thoughts which might be supposed to have been in his mind upon certain occasions. These might easily have had his name affixed to them, without the slightest intention of passing them off as his for the sake of giving them currency and authority. Similarly the title "A Psalm of Asaph" may indicate that the Psalm was taken from a collection founded by David's famous minstrel. Such a collection would have been preserved and used by the guild or family of Asaph, and added to from time to time, though it still retained the name of its founder.

While then the titles of the Psalms cannot be supposed to give certain information as to their authors, and many of the Psalms bearing the name of David or Asaph cannot have been written by them, we are not justified in rejecting the titles as blind and worthless conjectures. A sober criticism will allow them a certain weight, as giving, in general at least, some information as to the source from which the Psalms were derived, which is not to be rejected without good reason.

In criticising the title of a Psalm by the light of its contents much caution is necessary. The possibility of alterations and additions to the original poem must be taken into account.

[1] See the R.V. of 1 Chr. xvi. 7.

It is probable that many of the Psalms were not at once committed to writing, but like other oriental poetry, transmitted orally[1]. The comparison of Ps. xviii with 2 Sam. xxii shews that the text has in some cases suffered from accidental errors of transcription, while in others it appears to bear marks of intentional revision. The comparison of Ps. liii with Ps. xiv, and of Ps. cviii with Pss. lvii and lx, shews that editors did not scruple to alter earlier Psalms, or to combine portions of them, for their own special purposes. Additions seem to have been made with a view of adapting Psalms for liturgical use. Such processes, which can be definitely traced in some instances, have no doubt been in operation elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV.

THE AUTHORSHIP AND AGE OF THE PSALMS.

IT is obvious from what has been said in the preceding chapter that great uncertainty must necessarily rest upon the authorship of the Psalms. When once it is admitted, as it must be admitted, that the titles cannot be absolutely relied on, we are launched upon a sea of uncertainty. Internal evidence, whether of thought, or style, or language, is a precarious guide. The same Psalm has been confidently assigned by one critic to David, by another to the age of the Maccabees[2].

[1] Arabic poetry was preserved by the *râwîs*, or *reciters*. "The custom of committing verse to writing did not begin till near the end of the first century after the Flight. The whole of the old poetry was preserved by oral tradition only." Lyall's *Ancient Arabian Poetry*, p. xxxv.

[2] The question is often asked by the English reader why language does not determine the date of the books of the O.T. within at any rate comparatively definite limits. But (1) the remains of Hebrew literature of which the date is admitted as certain are too scanty to give much material for forming a judgment: (2) the Massoretic vocalisation, while here and there preserving ancient forms, has obscured distinctions under the uniform pronunciation of a later age: (3) the possibility of imitation of ancient models in a later age must be taken into account.

Important as it is for the full interpretation of many Psalms to know the circumstances under which they were written, and for the elucidation of the religious history of Israel to determine the age to which they belong, the Psalms as a whole suffer less from this uncertainty than might be expected. Their interest is human and universal. They appeal to the experience of all ages. Still the endeavour must be made to ascertain to what period of the history a Psalm belongs.

An uncritical age attributed the whole Psalter to David. Modern criticism has gone to the opposite extreme, and is disposed to refer the whole Psalter, or at least the greater part of it, to the period after the return from Babylon[1].

It would be strange indeed if none of those sacred "songs of Zion," the fame of which was so well known to her Babylonian captors (Ps. cxxxvii. 3, 4), had survived. But further, it is difficult to believe that the tradition of the Jewish Church was entirely wrong in assigning the foundation of the Psalter to David and regarding him as the most eminent religious poet of the nation.

His skill as poet and musician, and his interest in the development of religious music, are attested by the earliest records[2]. Later times pointed to him as the founder of the services of the sanctuary[3]. The leaders of the return from the exile believed themselves to be restoring his institutions[4].

But in particular, the incorporation of Ps. xviii in the Book of Samuel as a specimen of David's poetry illustrating his character and genius is the strongest evidence in favour of

[1] So, for example, Wellhausen in Bleek's *Introduction*, p. 507 (ed. 1876): "Since the Psalter belongs to the Hagiographa, and is the hymn-book of the congregation of the Second Temple...the question is not whether it contains any post-exilic Psalms, but whether it contains any pre-exilic Psalms." Similarly Reuss: "Our doubts do not go so far as to deny the possibility of referring a single one of the poems in the present collection of Synagogue hymns to the period of the kingdom. But we have no decisive proofs for such antiquity." *History of the O. T.* § 282.

[2] See 1 Sam. xvi. 17 ff.; xviii. 10; 2 Sam. i. 17 ff.; iii. 33 ff.; vi. 5, 15; xxii. 1; xxiii. 1 ff.; Amos vi. 5.

[3] 2 Chr. xxix. 30.

[4] Ezra iii. 10; Neh. xii. 24, 36, 46.

regarding David as the founder of the Psalter. That Psalm is there circumstantially ascribed to David, and there is no sufficient ground for placing the compilation of the Book of Samuel at so late a date that its evidence on this point can be set aside as a mere tradition which had sprung up in the course of centuries.

But if Ps. xviii must be acknowledged to be the work of David, important consequences follow. For depth of devotion, simplicity of trust, joyousness of gratitude, and confidence of hope, not less than for its natural force and poetic beauty, that Psalm has few rivals. It has all the freshness of creative genius. It can hardly have been the solitary production of its author. If such a Psalm could have been written by David, so might many others; and it is reasonable to inquire with regard to those which bear his name whether they may not actually have been composed by him.

Both poetry and music existed before David's time, and poetry had been carried to a high development in such compositions as Ex. xv and Judg. v. But with David a new era of religious poetry commenced. The personal element entered into it. It became the instrument of the soul's communion with God. David's natural poetic powers were awakened by his training in the schools of the prophets under Samuel[1]. The manifold vicissitudes of his life gave him an unparalleled depth and variety of experience. Chosen by God to be the founder of the kingdom of promise, he must still pass through trials and persecutions and dangers to the throne. When he had reached the zenith of his fame, he fell through pride and self-reliance, and by sharp chastisement must learn the grievousness of sin. But genius and circumstances alone could not have produced the Psalms. In his "last words" he himself declared,

> "The spirit of the LORD spake in me,
> And his word was upon my tongue."

Unique natural genius, trained and called into action by the discipline of an unique life, must still be quickened and illuminated by the supernal inspiration of the Holy Spirit, before it

[1] Comp. Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, Introd. § iii.

could strike out the strains, which were to be the pattern and model of religious poetry for all the ages.

It has often been asserted that the David of the Psalms is an entirely different character from the David of history. The devout singer and the rough warrior cannot, it is said[1], be the same person. But a great nature is necessarily many sided; and in early ages it is possible for traits of character which to us seem irreconcilable to coexist in the same individual. And the difference is often exaggerated. Not a few of the Psalms illustrate and are illustrated by the history of David's life; and in that history, fragmentary and incomplete as it necessarily is, are to be found abundant traces of the religious side of his character; of the confidence which in the midst of danger and difficulty threw itself unperplexed upon God; of the patience which could await God's time instead of rushing to revenge; of the simple faith which ascribed all success and advancement to God; of the hope which looked trustingly forward into the unknown future, in calm assurance that God would fulfil His promises; last but not least, of the penitence which humbled itself in unfeigned sorrow for sin.

It may have been the case, as Delitzsch supposes[2], that the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah were marked by fresh outbursts of Psalm poetry. Under both these kings great national deliverances called for fresh expressions of praise and thanksgiving (2 Ch. xx; 2 Kings xviii. ff.): Jehoshaphat exerted himself for the religious education of the country (2 Chr. xvii. 7 ff.): the collection of Proverbs, made under the direction of Hezekiah, attests his interest in literature (Prov. xxv. 1).

A few Psalms date from the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and the earlier years of the exile. Some may be from the pen of Jeremiah, who has been credited by some critics with the authorship of a considerable number[3].

With the Return from the Exile Psalmody revived. The harp

[1] e.g. by Reuss, § 157. [2] Introd. § iii.

[3] This appears to be due partly to the fact that so much of his personal and inner life is known to us from his autobiography; partly to his familiarity with existing literature and his free use of it, which results in numerous parallels between his prophecies and the Psalms.

which had been hung up on the willows of Babylon was strung once more. Fresh hymns were written for the services of the restored Temple[1]. The renewed study of the Law under Ezra and Nehemiah bore fruit in such meditations as Ps. cxix.

Did the Psalter still continue to receive further enrichment? The question has been warmly debated in ancient and modern times, whether any of the Psalms belong to the Maccabaean age. Prophecy was silent (1 Macc. iv. 46, &c.); but might not the great revival of national spirit naturally have found expression in poetry? and do not some of the Psalms clearly refer to the circumstances of that period?

Some critics would refer the whole of the last three books as well as many Psalms in the earlier books to that period, and bring down the completion of the collection to the reign of John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135—107) or Alexander Jannaeus (B.C. 105—79)[2].

The real question is, however, a much narrower one. The Psalms which have been most confidently and generally referred to the age of the Maccabees are xliv. lxxiv. lxxix. and lx. lxxx. lxxxiii; with a few others. These are thought to present features which belong to that age, and to no other; e.g. in Ps. xliv the description of the nation as suffering, though it has been faithful to God; in lxxiv the destruction of the synagogues, the profanation of the Temple, and the cessation of prophecy: and the quotation of lxxix. 2, 3 in 1 Macc. vii. 16, 17 with reference to the massacre of the Assideans by the usurping high-priest Alcimus, is supposed to imply that it was written on the occasion.

[1] Yet some of the Temple Psalms in the later books of the Psalter may have been revivals or adaptations of ancient hymns. An incidental reference in Jer. xxxiii. 11 shews that the doxology, "Give thanks to the LORD of hosts, for the LORD is good, for his mercy endureth for ever," was the characteristic formula of thanksgiving before the Captivity. Yet it is found only in the later books (iv and v) of the Psalter (Ps. c. 4, 5; cvi. 1; &c.), in Psalms which would generally be regarded as post-exilic. Is. lxiv. 11 refers to the 'praise-songs' of the pre-exilic Temple, and the existence of an order of 'singers' is implied by Ezek. xl. 44.

[2] "The Psalms preserved to us," says Reuss, "are for the most part the work of the generation which suffered under Antiochus, fought with Judah and Jonathan, and then under Simon enjoyed victory and rest, praising God in gratitude and humility." *Hist. of O.T.* § 474.

The question is one of exegesis, and a detailed examination of the characteristics of these Psalms must be deferred to the commentary on them. It will then be seen whether they cannot be as well or better referred to the Chaldean or Persian period, or even a much earlier time. Moreover it has well been pointed out that some distinctive features of the Maccabaean period are conspicuously absent from these Psalms. "They do not contain the slightest trace of those internal divisions of the people which were the most marked features of the Maccabaean struggle. The dangers then were as much from within as from without; and party jealousies brought the divine cause to the greatest peril. It is incredible that a series of Maccabaean Psalms should contain no allusion to a system of enforced idolatry, or to a temporising priesthood, or to a faithless multitude[1]."

The preliminary question may however be discussed here, whether the history of the Psalter and the Canon does not exclude the possibility of such late additions.

(1) As the author of the Book of Chronicles (1 Chr. xvi. 8ff.), in combining portions of Pss. cv, xcvi, cvi, includes as a part of cvi the doxology which marks the end of the fourth Book, it has been argued that the Psalter must have been already known to him in its five-fold division. This is extremely doubtful, and even if it is admitted, it cannot prove that the Psalter was finally complete, and closed against the admission of fresh Psalms.

(2) More important is the fact that all the Psalms which are most confidently set down as Maccabaean belong to the 'Elohistic' collection, which was anterior to the collections contained in Books IV and V[2]. Moreover some of them have musical titles, in contrast to the practice of the last collection. Is it conceivable that the LXX translators should have been so entirely at fault as to the meaning of the titles of lx and lxxx, if they were almost contemporary compositions?

(3) The Prologue to Ecclesiasticus speaks of the Canonical Books as already distinguished from other writings in the time of the author's grandfather, and of the Greek translation as already existing; and though again this statement does not

[1] Dr (now Bp) Westcott in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ii. 168.
[2] See below, p. xl ff.

amount to proof that the Canon was finally closed, it raises a strong presumption against the admission of fresh writings at so late a date as B.C. 150 or even 100. The Second Book of Maccabees speaks of the care which Judas took to collect the sacred writings which had been dispersed or lost in the war (2 Macc. ii. 14), but no hint is given that the collection included new works.

(4) If the *Psalms of Solomon*[1] could be referred to the Maccabaean age, they would afford an almost conclusive proof that the whole of the Psalter belongs to a much earlier time. But it is now generally agreed that this work belongs to the period after the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey in B.C. 63, and was completed soon after his death in B.C. 48[2]. Even if the Psalms of Solomon are to be placed at this later date, the argument does not altogether lose its force[3]. For they were written only a century after the standard of independence was raised by Mattathias, and less than half a century after the time at which the Psalter is supposed to have received its latest additions. But the contrast is immense. They are separated from the Psalter by an impassable gulf. "The spirit which the Psalms breathe is entirely that of Pharisaic Judaism. They are pervaded by an earnest moral tone and a sincere piety. But the righteousness which they preach and the dearth of which they deplore is, all through, the righteousness which consists in complying with all the Pharisaic prescriptions[4]." Their development of the doctrine of the Resurrection and the Messianic expectation separates them widely from the canonical Psalms. Where for example can we find parallels in the Psalter to language like the following with reference to the Resurrection?

[1] A collection of 18 Psalms, written in Hebrew, probably in Palestine, and now extant in a Greek version, which may be found in Fritzsche's *Libri Vet. Test. Pseudepigraphi Selecti*. A new edition, with translation and notes, was published by Prof. Ryle and Mr James in 1891.

[2] See Schürer's *Hist. of the Jewish People in the time of Jesus Christ*, Div. ii. § 32 (Vol. iii. p. 17 ff. E. T.).

[3] The development of this argument by Bp Westcott in Smith's *Dict. of the Bible*, ii. 168, on the hypothesis of the Maccabaean date of these Psalms, should still be consulted.

[4] Schürer, p. 21.

"The destruction of the sinner shall be for ever,
and he shall not be remembered, when He visiteth the righteous.
This is the portion of sinners for ever.
But they that fear the Lord shall arise unto life eternal,
and their life shall be in the light of the Lord and shall fail no more" (iii. 13—16).

"For the Lord will spare His saints,
and their transgressions will He blot out by correction:
for the life of the righteous is for ever,
but sinners shall be carried away to destruction
and their memorial shall no more be found" (xiii. 9, 10).

Equally remarkable is the expression of the Messianic hope:

"Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king,
the son of David, at the time which thou knowest, O God,
that he may reign over Israel thy servant.
And gird him with strength to break in pieces unrighteous rulers" (xvii. 23, 24).

* * * *

"And in his days there is no unrighteousness in the midst of them,
for all are holy, and their king is the anointed lord[1]" (*v.* 36).

* * * *

"And he himself is pure from sin, to rule over a great people;
to rebuke rulers and to destroy sinners by the might of a word.
And he shall not be feeble in his days, relying upon his God,
for God made him mighty in the holy spirit,
and wise in the counsel of understanding with strength and righteousness" (*vv.* 41, 42).

These considerations are sufficient, taken all together, to make us hesitate to assign Psalms to the Maccabaean period, except on the most cogent internal evidence. The discussion of such evidence must necessarily be deferred to the notes on each Psalm. Few commentators however deny the possibility, and most maintain the certainty, of the existence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Psalter.

[1] χριστὸς κύριος: cp. Lam. iv. 20 (LXX).

CHAPTER V.

THE COLLECTION AND GROWTH OF THE PSALTER.

INTERNAL evidence makes it certain that the Psalter grew up gradually from the union of earlier collections of Psalms. The various strata of which it is composed can to some extent be distinguished. Three principal divisions, marked by well-defined characteristics, may be observed. They appear to have arisen in successive chronological order, but such a supposition need not exclude the possibility that the earlier collection received late additions, or that the later collection may contain early Psalms.

(i) The First Division is coextensive with Book I (Pss. i—xli). All the Psalms in it have titles, with the exception of i. ii. x. xxxiii, and are described as Psalms "of David." The exceptions are easily accounted for. Pss. i and ii are introductory, and probably did not belong to the original collection. Ps. x was part of Ps. ix, or was written as a pendant to it. Ps. xxxiii appears to be of distinctly later date, inserted as an illustration of the last verse of Ps. xxxii.

(ii) The Second Division corresponds to Books II and III (Ps. xlii—lxxxix). All the Psalms in it, except xliii (which is really part of xlii) and lxxi, bear titles. It consists of (*a*) seven Psalms (or eight, if xlii and xliii are both reckoned) "of the sons of Korah" (xlii—xlix): (*b*) a Psalm "of Asaph" (l): (*c*) ten Psalms, all except lxvi, lxvii, "of David" (li—lxx): (*d*) an anonymous Psalm (lxxi), and a Psalm "of Solomon" (lxxii)[1]: (*e*) eleven Psalms "of Asaph" (lxxiii—lxxxiii): (*f*) a

[1] It has been conjectured by Ewald that Pss. li—lxxii originally stood after xli, so that the arrangement was (1) Davidic Psalms, i—xli; li—lxxii: (2) Levitical Psalms: (*a*) Korahite, xlii—xlix; (*b*) Asaphite, l, lxxiii—lxxxiii; (*c*) Korahite supplement, lxxxiv—lxxxix. The hypothesis is ingenious. It brings the Davidic Psalms together, and makes the note to lxxii. 20 more natural; and it connects the isolated Psalm of Asaph (l) with the rest of the group.

But it is clear that Books ii and iii formed a collection independent of Book i: and the editor may have wished to separate the mass of

supplement containing three Psalms "of the sons of Korah" (lxxxiv. lxxxv. lxxxvii); one "of David," which is manifestly a cento from other Psalms (lxxxvi); one "of Heman the Ezrahite" (lxxxviii); and one "of Ethan the Ezrahite" (lxxxix).

(iii) The Third Division corresponds to Books IV and V (Pss. xc—cl). In this division many Psalms have no title at all, and only a few bear the name of an author. In Book IV, Ps. xc bears the name of Moses: Pss. ci and ciii that of David. In Book V, Pss. cviii—cx. cxxii. cxxiv. cxxxi. cxxxiii. cxxxviii—cxlv, bear the name of David: cxxvii that of Solomon. Of the rest the majority have no title, or only that of a subordinate collection (e.g. 'A Song of Ascents').

We may now proceed to examine the characteristics of these divisions. The greater part of the Second Division is remarkably distinguished from the First and Third by the use of the Divine Names. Psalms xlii—lxxxiii are 'Elohistic'; that is to say, they employ the appellative *Elōhīm*='*God*,' in the place and almost to the exclusion of the proper name *Jehovah*, represented in the A. V. by *LORD*.

In Pss. i—xli, *Elohim* occurs absolutely[1] only 15 times, and in some of these cases it is required by the sense[2]. *Jehovah* on the other hand occurs 272 times.

In Pss. xlii—lxxxiii, the proportion is reversed. *Elohim* occurs 200 times, *Jehovah* only 43 times (exclusive of the doxology, lxxii. 18); while in Pss. lxxxiv—lxxxix *Elohim* occurs only 7 times, Jehovah 31 times.

the Asaphite Psalms from the Korahite Psalms by placing the Davidic Psalms between them, while he put l. next to li. on account of the similarity of its teaching on sacrifice. The note to lxxii. 20 is true for his collection; and it does not necessarily imply that none but Davidic Psalms have preceded. Cp. Job xxxi. 40.

[1] By 'absolutely' is meant, without either a pronoun attached to it ('my God' and the like) or a qualifying word grammatically connected with it ('God of my righteousness,' 'God of my salvation,' and the like). The English reader must remember that three Hebrew words, *El*, *Elōah*, and *Elōhīm*, are represented by *God* in the A.V. *El* occurs absolutely 11 times in division i, 29 times in division ii, 14 times in division iii. *Elōah* is rare in the Psalter.

[2] E.g. ix. 17; x. 4, 13; xiv. 1, 2, 5; xxxvi. 1, 7. In iii. 2 the reading is doubtful. See note there.

In Pss. xc—cl, *Jehovah* occurs 339 times, while *Elōhīm* (of the true God) is to be found only in Ps. cviii, which is taken direct from two Psalms in the Elohistic group, and in cxliv. 9, in a Psalm which is evidently compiled from various sources.

It may also be noted that *Adōnaī*='*Lord*' occurs much more frequently in the Second Division (31 times), than in the First (10 times), or Third (8 times).

This use of *Elōhīm* cannot be explained on internal grounds. It stands precisely as *Jehovah* does elsewhere, and not unfrequently the substitution leads to awkwardness of expression. Thus, for example, Ps. l. 7 is taken from Ex. xx. 2; lxviii. 1, 2, 7, 8 are based upon Num. x. 35; Judg. v. 4, 5, 31; lxxi. 19 is from Ex. xv. 11; and in each case *Elōhīm* takes the place of *Jehovah*. More striking still is the fact that in two Psalms which are repeated from Book I. (liii=xiv; lxx=xl. 14 ff.), the alteration is made, though in Ps. lxx *Jehovah* still occurs twice.

To what then is this peculiarity due? Is it characteristic of a particular style of writing? or is it the work of an editor or compiler?

It seems certain (1) from the alteration in Psalms adopted from Book I, (2) from the variety of the sources from which the Psalms in this group are derived, that the change is, in part at least, due to the hand of an editor. It may no doubt have been the usage of certain writers. It has been suggested that it was a custom in the family of Asaph, connected possibly with the musical or liturgical use of the Psalms. But even if the peculiarity is due in some instances to the author, there can be little doubt that it is due, in the group as a whole, to the collector or editor.

A guess might be hazarded that the collection was thus adapted for the use of the exiles, with a view to avoid the repetition of the Sacred Name in a heathen land. But no positive result can be arrived at. The relation of the 'Elohistic' Psalms to the 'Elohistic' documents in the Pentateuch is also an obscure question, which needs further investigation.

It seems clear, however, that the substitution of *Elōhīm* for *Jehovah* was not due to the superstitious avoidance of the use of the Sacred Name in later times. Books IV and V are

composed of Psalms the majority of which are unquestionably of later date than those in the Elohistic group. But in these books the name *Jehovah* is used throughout, with the exception noted above. The compiler of Book V knew the Elohistic Psalms in their present form: and so apparently did the compiler of Ps. lxxxvi, as may be inferred from a comparison of *v.* 14 with liv. 4 f.

The argument for the original independence of the three divisions which is derived from the use of the names of God is corroborated:

(*a*) By the repetition in the Second Division of Psalms found in the First, and in the Third of Psalms found in the Second. Thus liii = xiv: lxx = xl. 15 ff.: cviii = lvii. 7—11, lx. 5—12.

(*b*) By the note appended to Ps. lxxii., "the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended[1]." This note, whether taken over from an earlier collection by the editor of Books II and III, or inserted by him, appears to shew that he knew of no more Davidic Psalms, or at any rate that his collection contained no more. Clearly therefore his collection must have been independent of Books IV and V, which contain several more Psalms ascribed to David.

(*c*) By the difference already noticed in regard to titles. In this respect the Third Division is markedly distinguished from the First and Second. In these the Psalms with but few easily explained exceptions have titles, giving the name of the author or the collection from which the Psalm was taken, in many cases the occasion, and some musical or liturgical description or direction. But in the Third Division the majority of the Psalms are anonymous; musical and liturgical directions are rare; and titles of the obscure character of many of those in Divisions I and II are entirely absent. Moreover the musical term *Selah*, which occurs 17 times in Division I, and 50 times in Division II, is found but four times in Division III, and then in two Psalms ascribed to David (cxl. cxliii).

(*d*) By the character of the contents of the three divisions. Speaking broadly and generally, the Psalms of the First Division are *personal*, those of the Second, *national*, those of the Third,

[1] Comp. Job xxxi. 40.

liturgical. There are numerous exceptions, but it is in the First Division that personal prayers and thanksgivings are chiefly to be found: in the Second, prayers in special times of national calamity (xliv. lx. lxxiv. lxxix. lxxx. lxxxiii. lxxxix), and thanksgivings in times of national deliverance (xlvi. xlvii. xlviii. lxxv. lxxvi. lxv—lxviii): in the Third, Psalms of praise and thanksgiving for general use in the Temple services (xcii. xcv—c. cv—cvii. cxi—cxviii. cxx—cxxxvi. cxlvi—cl).

The various steps in the formation of the Psalter may have been somewhat as follows:

(1) An original collection, which bore the name *Psalms* (or, *Prayers*) *of David*, from its first and greatest poet, though poems by other writers were not excluded from it. It has already been suggested (p. xxix) that the general title of the collection was subsequently transferred to each separate Psalm in the First Group which was taken from it. To this 'Davidic' collection Psalms i and ii were prefixed as an introduction.

(2) Next, the 'Elohistic' collection was formed by the union of two selections of Levitical Psalms from the Korahite and Asaphite hymnaries with another selection of 'Davidic' Psalms. To this collection was added an appendix of Korahite and other Psalms (lxxxiv—lxxxix), which were not altered by the Elohistic editor.

(3) Finally, the Temple Psalms of the Return were collected, with a gleaning of earlier Psalms, some of which were believed to have been written by David, or were taken from a collection bearing his name.

The date of these collections cannot be determined with certainty. The nucleus of the First Collection may have been formed by Solomon, or certainly early in the regal period, though it appears to have received later additions. Nothing in the collection (not even xiv. 7) necessarily refers to the Exile or the Return.

The Second Collection contains Psalms of the middle period of the Kingdom, but the appendix at any rate cannot have been completed till the Return (lxxxv).

The Third Collection may be placed in the time of Ezra and

Nehemiah[1]. The Chronicler was familiar with it, and possibly found the doxology at the close of Ps. cvi already in its place (see p. xxxvi).

The possibility of much later additions has already been discussed (p. xxxv ff.).

Other collections no doubt preceded these. Such were 'The Book of Songs of the Sons of Korah,' 'The Songs of Asaph,' 'The Songs of Ascents.' Pss. xcii—c, with the exception perhaps of Ps. xciv, are marked by a common character, and may have formed a separate collection. The 'Hallelujah Psalms,' civ—cvi. cxi—cxviii. cxxxv. cxlvi—cl, may have been taken from some 'Book of Praise.'

The arrangement of the Psalms in the several books appears to have been determined partly by their arrangement in the smaller collections from which they were taken, where their order may have been fixed by considerations of date and authorship; partly by similarity of character and contents. Thus for example, we find groups of *Maschil* Psalms (xlii—xlv. lii—lv. lxxxviii, lxxxix), and *Michtam* Psalms (lvi—lx). Resemblance in character may account for the juxtaposition of l and li: xxxiii takes up xxxii. 11: xxxiv and xxxv both speak of 'the angel of the LORD,' who is mentioned nowhere else in the Psalter. The title of xxxvi links it to xxxv. 27 ('servant of the LORD'): that of lvi may connect it with lv. 6.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FORM OF HEBREW POETRY.

ANCIENT Hebrew poetry possesses neither metre nor rhyme[2]. Its essential characteristic is **rhythm**, which makes itself ap-

[1] Cp. the statement in 2 Macc. ii. 13. "Neemias founding a library gathered together...the writings of David" (τὰ τοῦ Δαυίδ).

[2] When Philo, Josephus, Eusebius, Jerome, and other early writers, compared Hebrew poetry with Greek and Latin metres, and spoke of hexameters and pentameters, sapphics, or trimeter and tetrameter iambics, they were using familiar language loosely. Various attempts have been made to discover a metrical system in the Psalms, on the basis of quantity, or of number of syllables or accents. Most of them involve

parent both in the rhythmical cadence of each separate clause, and in the rhythmical balance of clauses when they are combined in a verse.

The Hebrew language is characterised by a vigorous terseness and power of condensation which cannot be preserved in English. Hence the clauses of Hebrew poetry are as a rule short. They consist sometimes of two words only, most frequently of three words, but not seldom of more than three words.

The rhythm of the clause often reflects the thought which it expresses. Thus, for example, the lively animated rhythm of the opening stanza (*vv.* 1—3) of Ps. ii vividly suggests the tumultuous gathering of the nations; while the stately measure of *v.* 4 presents the contrast of the calm and unmoved majesty of Jehovah enthroned in heaven. Or again, the evening hymn Ps. iv sinks to rest in its concluding verse with a rhythm as reposeful as the assurance which it expresses.

The rhythm of clauses however, together with many other features of Hebrew poetry, such as assonance and alliteration, distinctive use of words and constructions, and so forth, chiefly concerns the student of the original. But the rhythmical balance of clauses combined in a verse admits of being reproduced in translation, and can to a large extent be appreciated by the English reader. Owing to this peculiar nature of its form, Hebrew poetry loses less in translation than poetry which depends for much of its charm upon rhymes or metres which cannot be reproduced in another language.

This balanced symmetry of form and sense is known as *parallelism of clauses* (*parallelismus membrorum*) or simply, *parallelism.* It satisfies the love of regular and harmonious movement which is natural to the human mind, and was specially adapted to the primitive method of antiphonal chant-

the abandonment of the Massoretic vocalisation, and invoke the aid of 'a whole arsenal of licences.' Happily they do not concern the English reader.

Rhyme is found occasionally (e.g. viii. 3 [*Heb.* 4]; cvi. 4—7), but it appears to be accidental rather than intentional, and is never systematically employed. Both rhyme and metre have been used in medieval and modern Jewish poetry from the 7th cent. A.D. onwards.

ing (Ex. xv. 1, 20, 21; 1 Sam. xviii. 7). Such poetry is not sharply distinguished from elevated prose. Many passages in the prophets are written in poetical style, and exhibit the features of parallelism as plainly as any of the Psalms[1].

The law of parallelism in Hebrew poetry has an exegetical value. It can often be appealed to in order to determine the construction or connexion of words, to elucidate the sense, or to decide a doubtful reading. The arrangement of the text in lines, adopted by Dr Scrivener in the standard edition of the A. V. from which the text in this edition is taken, and in the Revised Version, makes this characteristic of Hebrew poetry more plainly perceptible to the English reader.

The various forms of parallelism are generally classified under three principal heads:

(1) *Synonymous parallelism*, when the same fundamental thought is repeated in different words in the second line of a couplet. Thus in Ps. cxiv. 1:

"When Israel went forth out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language:"

and the same construction is maintained throughout the Psalm. Every page of the Psalter supplies abundant examples.

(2) *Antithetic* or *contrasted parallelism*, when the thought expressed in the first line of a couplet is corroborated or elucidated by the affirmation of its opposite in the second line. This form of parallelism is specially suited to Gnomic Poetry, and is particularly characteristic of the oldest collection of proverbs in the Book of Proverbs (chaps. x—xxii. 16). Thus for example:

"Every wise woman buildeth her house:
But folly plucketh it down with her own hands" (Prov. xiv. 1).

But it is by no means rare in the Psalms, e.g. i. 6,

"For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous:
But the way of the wicked shall perish."

(3) *Synthetic* or *constructive parallelism*. Under this head are classed the numerous instances in which the two lines of

[1] E.g. Is. lx. 1—3; lxv. 13, 14; Hos. xi. 8, 9; Nah. i. 2.

the couplet stand in the relation of cause and consequence, protasis and apodosis, proposition and qualification or supplement, or almost any logical or constructional relation; or in which the parallelism is one of form only without any logical relation between the clauses.

The simplest and most common form of parallelism is the couplet or distich: but this may be expanded into a tristich (triplet) or a tetrastich (quatrain) or even longer combinations, in a variety of ways. Thus the three lines of a verse may be synonymous:

"The floods have lifted up, O LORD,
The floods have lifted up their voice;
The floods lift up their waves" (Ps. xciii. 3).

Or two only of the lines may be synonymous, while the third is introductory (Ps. iii. 7), or supplementary (ii. 2), or antithetic (liv. 3).

Similarly in tetrastichs (usually including two verses) we find four synonymous lines, as in xci. 5, 6. Or the first line may be parallel to the third, the second to the fourth, as in xxvii. 3:

"Though an host should encamp against me,
My heart shall not fear:
Though war should rise against me,
Even then will I be confident."

Or two synonymous lines may be contrasted with two synonymous lines, as in xxxvii. 35, 36:

"I have seen the wicked in his terribleness,
And spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil:
And I passed by, and lo! he was not,
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

Even longer combinations than tetrastichs sometimes occur; and on the other hand single lines are found, for the most part as introductions or conclusions. While maintaining its fundamental characteristic of rhythm, Hebrew poetry admits of the greatest freedom and variety of form.

Strophical arrangement. Series of verses are, as might be expected, combined, and many Psalms consist of distinct groups of verses. Such groups may conveniently be called

stanzas or *strophes*, but the terms must not be supposed to imply that the same metrical or rhythmical structure recurs in each, as in Greek or Latin poetry. The strophes in a Psalm do not even necessarily consist of the same number of lines or verses.

Such divisions are sometimes clearly marked by a refrain, as in Pss. xlii—xliii. xlvi. lvii: or by alphabetical arrangement, as in cxix: or by *Selah*, denoting probably a musical interlude, as in Pss. iii and iv. But more frequently there is no external mark of the division, though it is clearly indicated by the structure and contents of the Psalm, as in Ps. ii.

Alphabetic or *Acrostic Psalms.*

Eight or nine Psalms[1] present various forms of alphabetic structure (Pss. ix. x. xxv. xxxiv. xxxvii. cxi. cxii. cxix. cxlv). In cxi and cxii each letter begins a line, and the lines are arranged in eight distichs and two tristichs.

In Pss. xxv. xxxiv. cxlv. Prov. xxxi. Lam. iv., each letter begins a distich, in Lam. i. ii. a tristich. In Pss. xxxvii each letter begins a pair of verses, commonly containing four, sometimes five, lines. In Lam. iii each verse in a stanza of three verses, and in Ps. cxix each verse in a stanza of eight verses, begins with the same letter, and the letters are taken in regular succession.

Such an arrangement, artificial though it seems, does not necessarily fetter a poet more than an elaborate metre or rhyme. It is not to be regarded as 'a compensation for the vanished spirit of poetry.' It was probably intended as an aid to memory, and is chiefly employed in Psalms of a proverbial character to connect detached thoughts, or when, as in Ps. cxix and in Lamentations, the poet needs some artificial bond to link together a number of variations upon one theme.

The elaborate development of the system in Lamentations proves that alphabetic structure is not in itself a proof of a very late date[2].

[1] Also Lam. i—iv: Prov. xxxi. 10—31. Bickell has pointed out traces of alphabetic structure in Nah. i. 2—10: and shewn that the original of Ecclesiasticus li. 13—30 was alphabetic.

[2] The early Roman poet Ennius wrote acrostics (Cicero, *de Divina-*

CHAPTER VII.

THE HEBREW TEXT, THE ANCIENT VERSIONS, AND THE ENGLISH VERSIONS.

i. *The Hebrew Text.* A few words on the character of the Hebrew Text are necessary in order to justify the occasional departures from it, which will be met with in this commentary.

The extant Hebrew MSS. of the O.T. are all comparatively recent. The oldest of which the age is known with certainty bears date A.D. 916; the majority are of the 12th to the 16th centuries. They all present substantially the same text[1], commonly called the Massoretic Text[2]. Thus while we possess MSS. of the N.T. written less than three centuries after the date of the earliest of the books, our oldest MS. of the O.T. is more than ten centuries posterior to the date of the latest of the books which it contains; and while our MSS. of the N.T. present a great variety of readings, those of the O.T. are practically unanimous in supporting the same text.

This unanimity was long supposed to be due to the jealous care with which the Jewish scribes had preserved the sacred text from the earliest times. But careful examination makes it clear that this is not the case. Since the rise of the schools of the 'Massoretes,' in the seventh and eighth centuries A.D., the text has, no doubt, been preserved with scrupulous exactness. But the recension which they adopted, whether originally

tione, ii. 54, § 111); and they are said to have been invented in Greece by the comedian Epicharmus (B.C. 540—450). We may compare the *alliteration*, which is a common feature of early poetry.

[1] The variations between them are (roughly speaking) not greater than the variations between the different editions of the A.V. which have appeared since 1611, and they concern for the most part unimportant points of orthography.

[2] *Massōrā* means (1) *tradition* in general: (2) specially, tradition concerning the text of the O.T., and in particular the elaborate system of rules and *memoria technica* by which the later scribes sought to guard the text from corruption. Those who devoted themselves to this study were called 'masters of Massōrā', or 'Massoretes'; and the term 'Massoretic' is applied to the text which their labours were designed to preserve.

derived from a single MS., as some suppose, or from a comparison of MSS. held in estimation at the time, unquestionably contains not a few errors, which had crept in during the long course of its previous history[1]. The proof of this lies in the following facts :—

(1) There are many passages in which the Massoretic Text cannot be translated without doing violence to the laws of grammar, or is irreconcilable with the context or with other passages.

(2) Parallel passages (e.g. Ps. xviii and 2 Sam. xxii) differ in such a way as to make it evident that the variations are due partly to accidental mistakes in transcription, partly to intentional revision.

(3) The Ancient Versions represent various readings, which in many cases bear a strong stamp of probability upon them, and often lessen or remove the difficulties of the Massoretic Text.

The Massoretic Text as a whole is undoubtedly superior to any of the Ancient Versions : but we are amply justified in calling in the aid of those Versions, and in particular the Septuagint, wherever that text appears to be defective: and even where it is not in itself suspicious, but some of the Ancient Versions offer a different reading, that reading may deserve to be taken into account.

In some few cases, where there is reason to suspect corruption anterior to all extant documentary authorities, it may even be allowable to resort to conjectural emendation, and such emendations will occasionally be mentioned.

[1] The history of the Hebrew text may be divided into four periods. (1) The first of these periods was marked by the exclusive use of the archaic character: (2) the second, from the time of Ezra to the destruction of Jerusalem, saw the archaic character completely superseded by the square character, as the Hebrew language was superseded by Aramaic : (3) in the third period, from the Fall of Jerusalem to the end of the fifth century, the consonantal text was fixed: (4) in the fourth period, the exegetical tradition of the proper method of reading the text was stereotyped by the addition of the vowels, and an elaborate system of rules invented to secure the accurate transmission of the text even in the minutest particulars.

Two further points must be mentioned here in order to explain some of the notes:

(1) Hebrew, like other Semitic languages, was originally written without any vowels, except such long vowels as were represented by consonants. In the earlier stages of the language even these were sparingly used. The present elaborate system of vowel marks or 'points,' commonly called the 'Massoretic punctuation' or 'vocalisation,' was not reduced to writing until the seventh or eighth century A.D. It stereotyped the pronunciation and reading of the O. T. then current, and in many respects represents a far older tradition. But in a vowelless, or as it is called 'unpointed,' text, many words may be read in different ways, and the Massoretic punctuation does not appear in all cases to give the true way of reading the consonants.

(2) In some passages the traditional method of *reading* (Q'rī) did not agree with the consonants of the *written text* (K'thībh). In such cases the Massoretes did not alter the text, but appended a marginal note, giving the consonants with which the vowels shewn in the text were to be read. It should be clearly understood that the *Q'rī* or marginal reading is the accepted reading of the Jewish textual tradition. But internal evidence, and the evidence of the Ancient Versions, lead us to prefer sometimes the *Q'rī* and sometimes the *K'thībh*. See for example Ps. xxiv. 4, where A.V. and R.V. rightly follow the *K'thībh*, and desert the Jewish tradition: or Ps. c. 3, where A.V. unfortunately followed the *K'thībh*, and R.V. has happily taken the *Q'rī*.

ii. *The Ancient Versions of the O. T.* These possess a fresh interest for the English reader, since the R.V. has given occasional references to them in its margin.

(i) *The Septuagint.* The oldest and most valuable of them is the Greek Version, commonly called the SEPTUAGINT (Sept. or LXX), or Version of the Seventy Elders. It derives its name from the tradition that the translation of the Pentateuch was made by seventy or seventy-two elders, despatched from Jerusalem to Alexandria at the request of Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 283—247). But the 'Letter of Aristeas,' on which this story rests, is

undoubtedly a forgery, and all that can be asserted about the origin of the Septuagint is that it was made (1) in Egypt, and probably at Alexandria, (2) at different times and by different hands during the third and second centuries B.C., (3) before the vowel-points had been added to the Hebrew text, or that text had finally taken its present form.

The Pentateuch was probably translated first under the earlier Ptolemies: and the grandson of Jesus the son of Sirach, about 132 B.C., knew and used the version of the Hagiographa as well as of the Law and the Prophets[1]. This, it may be assumed, included the Psalter.

The character of the LXX varies greatly in different parts of the O.T. The work of pioneers in the task of translation, with no aids of grammar and lexicon to help them, naturally presents many imperfections. Yet not seldom it gives a valuable clue to the meaning of obscure words, or suggests certain corrections of the Massoretic Text. The version of the Psalter is on the whole fairly good, though it is often altogether at fault in difficult passages. It has a special interest for English readers, because, as will be seen presently, it has indirectly had considerable influence on the version most familiar to many of them.

Unfortunately the Septuagint has not come down to us in its original form. The text has suffered from numerous corruptions and alterations, partly through the carelessness of transcribers, partly through the introduction of fresh renderings intended to harmonise it with the Massoretic Text, or taken from other Greek Versions.

The most important MSS. of the LXX for the Psalter, to which reference will occasionally be made, are the following[2]:

The Vatican MS. (denoted by the letter B); a splendid copy of the Greek Bible, written in the fourth century A.D., and now preserved in the Vatican Library at Rome. Ten leaves of the Psalter, containing Pss. cv. 27—cxxxvii. 6, are unfortunately lost.

[1] See above, p. xii f.

[2] For fuller information see Dr Swete's edition of the LXX, published by the Camb. Univ. Press. The Psalter is to be had separately in a convenient form.

The equally splendid Sinaitic MS. (denoted by the letter ℵ *Aleph*), also written in the fourth century, found by Tischendorf in the convent of St Catharine on Mt Sinai, and now at St Petersburg.

The Alexandrine MS. (denoted by the letter A), written in the middle of the fifth century, brought from Alexandria, and now the great treasure of the British Museum. Nine leaves are wanting in the Psalter (Ps. xlix. 19—lxxix. 10).

The Septuagint, with all its defects, is of the greatest interest to all students of the O.T.

(1) It preserves evidence for the text far more ancient than the oldest Hebrew MS., and often represents a text differing from the Massoretic recension.

(2) It is one of the most ancient helps for ascertaining the meaning of the language of the O.T., and is a valuable supplement to Jewish tradition.

(3) It was the means by which the Greek language was wedded to Hebrew thought, and the way prepared for the use of that language in the New Testament.

(4) The great majority of the quotations made from the O.T. by the writers of the N.T. are taken from the LXX.

(5) It is the version in which the O.T. was studied by the Fathers of the Eastern Church, and indirectly, in the old Latin Versions made from it, by those of the Western, until Jerome's new translation from the Hebrew came into use. In the Psalter its influence was permanent, for as will be seen below (p. lv), the new version never superseded the old.

(ii) *The Targum.* After the return from the Babylonian exile, Aramaic, sometimes inaccurately called Chaldee, began to take the place of Hebrew in Palestine. As Hebrew died out, the needs of the people were met by oral translations or paraphrases in Aramaic. Hence arose the Aramaic Versions commonly called the TARGUMS[1]. The Targum of the Psalter is on the whole a fairly good version, though it often assumes the character of a paraphrastic interpretation. In its present form it appears to contain elements as late as the ninth century, but in the main

[1] *Targum* means *interpretation* or *translation.* Cp. *dragoman*, lit. *interpreter.*

it belongs to a much earlier date. As a rule it represents the Massoretic recension, and is not of much value for textual criticism. It is interesting as preserving interpretations current in the ancient Jewish Church, in particular, for the reference of several passages in the Psalter to the Messiah[1].

(iii) *The Syriac Version*, known as the *Peschito* (*simple* or *literal* version), probably originated at Edessa, about the second century A.D. It was made from the Hebrew, with the help of Jewish converts or actual Jews. But the present text in some parts of the O.T. agrees with the LXX in such a way as to make it evident that either the original translators consulted that version, or subsequent revisers introduced renderings from it. This is largely the case in the Psalms.

(iv) *The later Greek Versions* require only a brief mention. That of AQUILA of Pontus, a Jewish proselyte from heathenism, was made in the beginning of the second century A.D., when the breach between Church and Synagogue was complete, and the Jews desired an accurate version for purposes of controversy with Christians. It is characterised by a slavish but ingenious literalism.

That of THEODOTION, made towards the end of the second century, or possibly earlier[2], was little more than a revision of the LXX.

That of SYMMACHUS, made probably a little later than that of Theodotion, was also based on the LXX. It aimed at combining accuracy and perspicuity, and was by far the best of the three.

These versions were collected in the gigantic work of ORIGEN (A.D. 185—254) called the HEXAPLA, which contained in six parallel columns, (1) the Hebrew Text, (2) the Hebrew transliterated into Greek letters, (3) Aquila, (4) Symmachus, (5) the LXX, (6) Theodotion. In the Psalter the Hexapla became the Octapla by the addition of two columns containing two more Greek versions known as the 'Fifth' (*Quinta*) and 'Sixth' (*Sexta*).

[1] See e.g. Ps. xxi. 1, 7; xlv. 2, 7; lxi. 6, 8; lxxii. 1; lxxx. 15.

[2] See Schürer's *Hist. of the Jewish People &c.*, Div. ii. § 33 (Vol. iii. p. 173, E. T.).

Unfortunately only fragments of these versions are extant[1]. Generally, though not always, they agree with the Massoretic Text.

(v) *The Latin Versions.* The earliest Latin Version of the O.T., the VETUS LATINA or OLD LATIN, was made in North Africa from the LXX. This version, of which various recensions appear to have been current, was twice revised by ST JEROME (Hieronymus). The first revision, made about A.D. 383, is known as the *Roman Psalter*, probably because it was made at Rome and for the use of the Roman Church at the request of Pope Damasus; the second, made about A.D. 387, is called the *Gallican Psalter*, because the Gallican Churches were the first to adopt it.

Shortly afterwards, about A.D. 389, Jerome commenced his memorable work of translating the O.T. directly from the Hebrew, which occupied him for fourteen years. After bitter opposition and many vicissitudes, it won its way by its intrinsic excellence to be the Bible of the Latin Church, and came to be known as THE VULGATE.

But long familiarity with the Old Latin Version of the Psalter made it impossible to displace it, and the Gallican Psalter is incorporated in the Vulgate in place of Jerome's new translation. That new translation, "iuxta Hebraicam veritatem," never came into general use. It is of great value for the interpretation of the text, and shews that the Hebrew text known to Jerome was in the main the same as the present Massoretic Text.

Accordingly, the student must remember that in the Psalter the Vulgate is an echo of the LXX, and not an independent witness to text or interpretation: while Jerome's translation (referred to as *Jer.*) occupies the place which the Vulgate does in the other books of the O.T.[2]

iii. *The English Versions.* It would be impossible to give here even a sketch of the history of the English Bible. But as the Version with which many readers are most familiar is not

[1] Collected with exhaustive completeness in F. Field's *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt.* 1875.

[2] The best edition of Jerome's Psalter with critical apparatus is that by P. de Lagarde, *Psalterium iuxta Hebraeos Hieronymi*, 1874.

that in the Bible, but that in the Prayer-Book, it seems worth while to give a brief account of its origin and characteristics.

As the Old Latin Version held its ground against Jerome's more accurate translation, because constant liturgical use had established it too firmly for it to be displaced, so the older English Version of the Psalter taken from the Great Bible has kept its place in the Prayer-Book, and has never been superseded for devotional use.

The 'Great Bible,' sometimes known as Cromwell's, because the first edition (1539) appeared under his auspices, sometimes as Cranmer's, because he wrote the preface to the second edition (1540), was a revision of Matthew's Bible (1537), executed by Coverdale with the help of Sebastian Münster's Latin version, published in 1534—5.

Matthew's Bible was a composite work. The Pentateuch and N.T. were taken from Tyndale's published translation; the books from Ezra to Malachi and the Apocrypha from Coverdale's version; the remaining books from Joshua to 2 Chron. from a translation which there is little reason to doubt was made by Tyndale.

The Psalter in Matthew's Bible was therefore Coverdale's work: and Coverdale's Version (1535) lays no claim to independence. He tells us in the *Epistle unto the Kynges hyghnesse* prefixed to the work, that he had "with a cleare conscience purely and faythfully translated this out of fyve sundry interpreters," and the original title-page described the book as "faithfully and truly translated out of Douche and Latyn into Englishe."

The 'Douche' was doubtless the Swiss-German version known as the Zurich Bible: the 'Latyn' was of course the Vulgate: and it is worth while thus to trace the pedigree of the Prayer-Book Version, for in spite of successive revisions, it retains many marks of its origin. Many of its peculiar renderings, and in particular the additions which it contains, are derived from the LXX through the Vulgate.

The A.V. of 1611, though more accurate, is less melodious, and when, at the revision of the Prayer-Book in 1662, the version of 1611 was substituted in the Epistles and Gospels, the

old Psalter was left untouched. "The choirs and congregations had grown familiar with it, and it was felt to be smoother and more easy to sing."[1]

The Revised Version of 1885 has made a great advance upon the A.V. in respect of accuracy of rendering. The changes made by the Revisers will, as a rule, be quoted in this commentary, but the translation must be read and studied as a whole in order properly to appreciate their force and value. Even with the help which the R.V. now supplies to the English reader, it does not seem superfluous to endeavour by more exact renderings to bring the student closer to the sense of the original.

It is well known that the A.V. frequently creates artificial distinctions by different renderings of the same word, and ignores real distinctions by giving the same rendering for different words: and this, though to a far less extent, is still the case in the R.V.[2] Rigid uniformity of rendering may be misleading, but it is well that attention should be called to distinctions where they exist. Again, the precise force of a tense, or the exact emphasis of the original, cannot always be given without some circumlocution which would be clumsy in a version intended for general use: but it is worth while to attempt to express finer shades of meaning in a commentary.

The best translation cannot always adequately represent the original: and it is well that the English reader should be reminded that the sense cannot always be determined with precision, and may often best be realised by approaching it from different sides.

[1] See Bp Westcott's *History of the English Bible*, chap. iii.

[2] See, for example, iii. 2, 7, 8, where the connexion is obscured by the rendering of the same word *help* in *v.* 2, and *salvation* in *v.* 8. Two entirely different words are rendered *blessed* in xli. 1, 13. The first expresses congratulation, (*Happy:* cp. *be made happy* in *v.* 2): the second expresses the tribute of human reverence to the divine majesty. The word rendered *trust* or *put trust in* in vii. 1, xi. 1 is quite distinct from the word similarly rendered in xiii. 5. It means *to take refuge in*, and the sense gains remarkably by the correct rendering. The exact rendering of a tense may be sufficient to draw a forcible picture, as in vii. 15.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSIANIC HOPE.

Poetry was the handmaid of Prophecy in preparing the way for the coming of Christ. Prophetic ideas are taken up, developed, pressed to their full consequences, with the boldness and enthusiasm of inspired imagination. The constant use of the Psalms for devotion and worship familiarised the people with them. Expectation was aroused and kept alive. Hope became part of the national life. Even Psalms, which were not felt beforehand to speak of Him Who was to come, contributed to mould the temper of mind which was prepared to receive Him when He came in form and fashion far other than that which popular hopes had anticipated; and they were recognised in the event as pointing forward to Him.

This work of preparation went forward along several distinct lines, some of which are seen to converge or meet even in the O.T., while others were only harmonised by the fulfilment. Thus (1) some Psalms pointed forward to the Messiah as Son of God and King and Priest: others (2) prepared the way for the suffering Redeemer: others (3) only find their full meaning in the perfect Son of Man: others (4) foretell the Advent of Jehovah Himself to judge and redeem.

All these different lines of thought combined to prepare the way for Christ; but it must be remembered that the preparation was in great measure silent and unconscious. It is difficult for us who read the O.T. in the light of its fulfilment to realise how dim and vague and incomplete the Messianic Hope must have been until the Coming of Christ revealed the divine purpose, and enabled men to recognise how through long ages God had been preparing for its consummation.

(1) *The Royal Messiah* (Psalms ii. xviii. xx. xxi. xlv. lxi. lxxii. lxxxix. cx. cxxxii).

The Kingdom of Israel was at once the expression of God's purpose to establish an universal kingdom upon earth, and the means for the accomplishment of that purpose. The people of Israel was Jehovah's son, His firstborn (Ex. iv. 22, 23; Deut. xxxii.

6; Hos. xi. 1), and His servant (Is. xli. 8); and the Davidic king as the representative of the nation was Jehovah's son, His first-born (2 Sam. vii. 14; Ps. ii. 7; lxxxix. 26, 27), and His servant (2 Sam. vii. 5 ff.). He was no absolute despot, reigning in His own right, but the 'Anointed of Jehovah' who was the true King of Israel, appointed by Him as His viceroy and representative (Ps. ii. 6). He was said to "sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chr. xxviii. 5), or even "on the throne of the LORD" (1 Chr. xxix. 23).

Thus he was at once the representative of the people before Jehovah, and the representative of Jehovah before the people, and before the nations. To Him as Jehovah's viceroy was promised the sovereignty over the nations. Nathan's message to David (2 Sam. vii) was the Davidic king's patent of adoption and title deed of inheritance. It was the proclamation of "the everlasting covenant" which God made with the house of David (2 Sam. xxiii. 5). Upon the divine choice of David and his house, and in particular upon this great prophecy, are based a series of what may be called *Royal Psalms*. Critical events in the life of David or later kings, or in the history of the kingdom, gave occasion to David himself, or other poet-seers, to declare the full significance and extent of that promise. Successive kings might fail to realise their rightful prerogatives, but the divine promise remained unrevoked, waiting for one who could claim its fulfilment in all its grandeur.

Different aspects of the promise are presented in different Psalms. They can only be briefly summarised here: for fuller explanation reference must be made to the introductions and notes to each Psalm.

In Ps. ii the prominent thought is the divine sonship of the anointed king and its significance. The nations are mustering with intent to renounce their allegiance to the king recently enthroned in Zion. But their purpose is vain, for the king is none other than Jehovah's Son and representative. In rebelling against him they are rebelling against Jehovah, and if they persist, will do it to their own destruction.

In David's great thanksgiving (Ps. xviii) he celebrates Jehovah

as the giver of victory, and recognises that his position as "the head of the nations" (*v.* 43) has been given him in order that he may proclaim Jehovah's glory among them (*v.* 49).

The relation of the king to Jehovah as His anointed representative is the ground of intercession and confidence in Ps. xx. 6; and the thanksgiving for victory which follows in Ps. xxi naturally dwells upon the high dignity which belongs to him in virtue of that relation, and anticipates his future triumphs. The same thought is repeated in Ps. lxi. 6 f.

Ps. xlv is a marriage song for Solomon or some later king of the house of David. In lofty language the poet sets before him the ideal of his office (cp. 2 Sam. xxiii. 3 ff.), and claims for him the fulness of the promise of eternal dominion. The union with a foreign princess suggests the hope of the peaceful union of all nations in harmonious fellowship with Israel.

Ps. lxxii is an intercession for Solomon or some other king on his accession. In glowing colours it depicts the ideal of his office, and prays that he may fulfil it as the righteous sovereign who redresses wrong, and may rule over a world-wide empire, receiving the willing homage of the nations to his virtue, and proving himself the heir of the patriarchal promise.

In some crisis of national disaster the author of Ps. lxxxix recites the promise to David, and contrasting its brilliant hopes with the disappointment which it was his trial to witness, pleads for the renewal of God's favour.

Ps. cx is a kind of solemn oracle. It describes David as king, priest, and conqueror. Jehovah adopts him as His assessor, placing him in the seat of honour at His side. Though not of Aaron's line he is invested with a priestly dignity. The new king of Zion must inherit all the privileges of the ancient king of Salem, and enter upon the religious as well as the civil memories of his capital.

Once more, in Ps. cxxxii, possibly in days when the kingdom had ceased to exist, and the representative of the house of David was only a governor appointed by a foreign conqueror, the ancient promise is pleaded in confidence that it must still find fulfilment.

These Psalms refer primarily to the circumstances of the

time. The revolt of the nations, the royal marriage, the accession of a prince of unique promise, the installation of the king, gave the inspired poets opportunity for dwelling on the promises and hopes connected with the Davidic kingdom. But successive princes of David's line failed to fulfil their high destiny, to subdue the nations, to rule the world in righteousness, to establish a permanent dynasty. The kingdom ceased to exist; yet it was felt that the divine promise could not fail; and hope was directed to the future. Men were led to see that the divine promise had not been frustrated but postponed, and to look for the coming of One who should 'fulfil' the utmost that had been spoken of Israel's king[1].

(2) *The suffering Messiah* (Pss. xxii. lxix. cix. xxxv. xli. lv.). Men's minds had to be prepared not only for a triumphant King, but for a suffering Saviour. The great prophecy of Is. lii, liii finds preludes and echoes in the Psalter in what may be called the *Passion Psalms*. The sufferings of David and other saints of the old dispensation were typical: they helped to familiarise men with the thought of the righteous suffering for God's sake, of suffering as the path to victory, of glory to be won for God and deliverance for man through suffering. They were the anticipation, as the sufferings of the members of the Christian Church are the supplement (Col. i. 24), of the afflictions of Christ.

But not only were these sufferings in themselves typical, but the records of them were so moulded by the Spirit of God as to prefigure the sufferings of Christ even in circumstantial details. These details are not the most important part of the type or prophecy; but they serve to arrest attention, and direct it to the essential idea.

These Psalms do not appear to have been applied to the Messiah in the Jewish Church as the Royal Psalms were. It was Christ Himself who first shewed His disciples that He must gather up into Himself and fulfil the manifold experiences of the people of God, in suffering as well as in triumph, and taught them to recognise that those sufferings had been foreor-

[1] For references to the Messianic interpretations of the Targums see note on p. liv.

dained in the divine purpose, and how they had been foreshadowed throughout the Old Testament.

Ps. xxii stands by itself among these Psalms. In its description of the Psalmist's sufferings, and in its joyous anticipation of the coming extension of Jehovah's kingdom, it foreshadows the Passion of Christ and its glorious fruits: and our Lord's use of the opening words (and probably of the whole Psalm) upon the Cross, stamps it as applicable to and fulfilled in Him.

Ps. lxix records the sufferings of one who was persecuted for God's sake (*vv.* 7 ff.). In his consuming zeal for God's house, in his suffering as the victim of causeless hatred (cp. xxxv. 19; cix. 3 ff.), in his endurance of reproach for his faithfulness to God, he was the prototype of Christ. The contemptuous mockery (*vv.* 12, 20) and maltreatment (*vv.* 21, 26) to which he was exposed, prefigured the actual sufferings of Christ. The curse which falls upon his persecutors (*v.* 25; cp. cix. 8) becomes the doom of the arch-traitor (Acts i. 20); and the judgment invoked upon his enemies (*vv.* 22—24) finds its fulfilment in the rejection of apostate Israel (Rom. xi. 9, 10).

The treachery of the faithless friend described in xli. 9 (cp. lv. 12 ff.) anticipates the treachery of the false disciple.

(3) *The Son of Man* (Pss. viii. xvi. xl). Psalms which describe the true destiny of man, the issue of perfect fellowship with God, the ideal of complete obedience, unmistakably point forward to Him who as the representative of man triumphed where man had failed.

Ps. viii looks away from the Fall and its fatal consequences to man's nature, position, and destiny in the purpose of God. Christ's perfect humanity answered to that ideal, and is seen to be the pledge of the fulfilment of the divine purpose for the whole race of mankind (Heb. ii. 6 ff.).

In Ps. xvi faith and hope triumph over the fear of death in the consciousness of fellowship with God. Yet the Psalmist did not escape death; his words looked forward, and first found their adequate realisation in the Resurrection of Christ (Acts ii. 25 ff.; xiii. 35).

In Ps. xl the Psalmist professes his desire to prove his gratitude to God by offering the sacrifice of obedience. But that

obedience was at best imperfect. His words must wait to receive their full accomplishment in the perfect obedience of Christ (Heb. x. 5 ff.).

Christ as the perfect Teacher adopted and 'fulfilled' the methods of the teachers of the old dispensation (Ps. lxxviii. 1).

(4) *The coming of God.* Another series of Psalms describes or anticipates the Advent of Jehovah Himself to judge and to redeem. Such are xviii. 7 ff. l. lxviii. xcvi—xcviii. They correspond to the prophetic idea of 'the day of Jehovah,' which culminates in Mal. iii. 1 ff. They do not indeed predict the Incarnation, but they served to prepare men's minds for the direct personal intervention of God which was to be realised in the Incarnation. We find passages originally spoken of Jehovah applied in the N.T. to Christ[1]. The words of Ps. lxviii. 18, which describe the triumphant ascent of Jehovah to His throne after the subjugation of the world, are adapted and applied to the triumphant return of Christ to heaven and His distribution of the gifts of grace (Eph. iv. 8).

The words of cii. 25, 26, contrasting the immutability of the Creator with the mutability of created things, originally addressed to Jehovah by the exile who appealed to Him to intervene on behalf of Sion, are applied to the Son through whom the worlds were made (Hebr. i. 10).

Thus the inspired poetry of the Psalter, viewing the Davidic kingdom in the light of the prophetic promises attached to it, played its part in preparing men's minds for a King who should be God's Son and representative, as it came to be interpreted in the course of history through failure and disappointment. The record of the Psalmists' own sufferings helped to give some insight into the part which suffering must perform in the redemption of the world. Their ideals of man's destiny and duty implied the hope of the coming of One who should perfectly fulfil them. The expectation of Jehovah's advent to judge and redeem anticipated a direct divine interposition for the establishment of the divine kingdom in the world.

It is not to be supposed that the relation of these various elements of the preparation could be recognised, or that they

[1] See Bp Westcott's *Hebrews*, p. 89.

could be harmonised into one consistent picture beforehand. It was reserved for the event to shew that the various lines of hope and teaching were not parallel but convergent, meeting in the Person and Work of Him Who is at once God and Man, Son and Servant, Priest and King, Sufferer and Victor.

It has been assumed thus far that these Psalms refer primarily to the circumstances under which they were written. Many commentators however regard some of the 'Royal Psalms,' in particular Pss. ii. xlv. lxxii. cx. as direct prophecies of the Messianic King: some because they are unable to discover the precise historical occasion in existing records: others, because the language seems to reach beyond what could be predicated of any earthly king, and the N. T. application of these Psalms to Christ appears to them to require that they should be referred to Him alone.

The particular historical reference of each of these Psalms will be discussed in the introduction to it: here it must suffice to observe that such Psalms as ii and xlv produce the decided impression that they were written in view of contemporary events. Lofty as is the language used, it is no more than is warranted by the grandeur of the divine promises to the house of David; and if the words are applied to Christ with a fulness and directness which seems to exclude any lower meaning, it must be remembered that it was through the institution of the kingdom that men were taught to look for Him, and their fulfilment in Him presumes rather than excludes the view that they had a true, if partial, meaning for the time at which they were written.

Similarly in the case of the 'Passion Psalms' it has been thought that, at least in Ps. xxii, the Psalmist is speaking in the person of Christ. Yet even this Psalm plainly springs out of personal suffering; though it is equally plain that the character of that suffering was providentially moulded to be a type, and the record of it inspired by the Holy Spirit to be a prophecy, of the sufferings of Christ. That Ps. lxix cannot as a whole be placed in the mouth of Christ is evident, if for no other reason, from the confession of sin in *v.* 5.

Have then these Psalms, has prophecy in general, a 'double

sense?' a primary historical sense in relation to the circumstances under which they were written, and a secondary typical or prophetical sense, in which they came to be understood by the Jewish and afterwards by the Christian Church? We may no doubt legitimately talk of a 'double sense,' if what we mean is that Psalmist and Prophet did not realise the full meaning of their words, and that that meaning only came to be understood as it was unfolded by the course of history. But is it not a truer view to regard both senses as essentially one? The institutions of Israel and the discipline of the saints of old were designed to express the divine purpose as the age and the people were able to receive it. The divine purpose is eternally one and the same, though it must be gradually revealed to man, and man's apprehension of it changes. And it is involved in any worthy conception of inspiration that inspired words should express divine ideas with a fulness which cannot at once be intelligible, but only comes to be understood as it is interpreted by the course of history or illuminated by the light of fuller revelation.

Inspired words are "springing and germinant" in their very nature: they grow with the growing mind of man. They are 'fulfilled,' not in the sense that their meaning is exhausted and their function accomplished, but in the sense that they are enlarged, expanded, ennobled. What is temporary and accidental falls away, and the eternal truth shines forth in its inexhaustible freshness and grandeur.

For us the Psalms which were designed to prepare the way for the coming of Christ bear witness to the unity of the divine plan which is being wrought out through successive ages of the world.

(5) *The nations.* Under the head of Messianic Hope in the Psalter must be included the view which is presented of the relation of the nations to Jehovah and to Israel. Few features are more striking than the constant anticipation of the inclusion of all nations in Jehovah's kingdom.

On the one hand indeed the nations appear as the deadly enemies of Jehovah's people, leagued together for its destruction (ii. lxxxiii), but doomed themselves to be destroyed if they

persist in their unhallowed purpose (ii. 9; ix. 17 ff.; xxxiii. 10; xlvi. 6 ff.; lix. 5, 8).

But concurrently with this view of the relation of the nations to Jehovah and Israel, another and more hopeful view is constantly presented. The nations as well as Israel belong to Jehovah, and are the objects of His care; they will eventually render Him homage; and Israel is to be the instrument for accomplishing this purpose and establishing the universal divine kingdom.

(*a*) The earth and all its inhabitants belong to Jehovah as their Creator (xxiv. 1; cp. viii. 1); they are under His observation (lxvi. 7), and subservient to His purposes (xxxiii. 14); He disciplines and teaches them (xciv. 10); they are addressed as being capable of moral instruction (xlix. 1).

He is the supreme and universal King and Judge (xxii. 28; xlvi. 10; xlvii. 2, 8, 9; xcvi. 13; xcviii. 9; xcix. 2; cxiii. 4); the nations are constantly exhorted to render Him homage (ii. 8 ff.), to fear Him (xxxiii. 8), to praise Him (lxvi. 1 f.; cxvii. 1; cxlv. 21), and even to worship Him in His temple (xcvi. 7 ff.; c. 1, 2).

(*b*) The time will come when all nations will acknowledge His sovereignty (xxii. 27; lxvi. 4; lxviii. 29 ff.; lxxxvi. 9; cii. 22). The kings of the earth will render homage to their sovereign (cii. 15; cxxxviii. 4). To Him as the hearer of prayer shall "all flesh" come (lxv. 2); He is the confidence of all the ends of the earth (lxv. 5); and the Psalter ends with the chorus of universal praise from every living thing (cl. 6).

(*c*) Israel is Jehovah's instrument for accomplishing the world-wide extension of His kingdom.

In the early days of the kingdom it may have seemed that Israel's destiny was to subjugate the nations and include them in the kingdom of Jehovah by conquest (ii; xviii. 43; xlvii); yet the thought is never far distant that the object of Israel's victories is to make Jehovah known (xviii. 49; lvii. 9), and to lead to the harmonious union of the nations with His people (xlvii. 9). Ps. xlv suggests the hope of peaceful alliance, Ps. lxxii of conquest by moral supremacy (*vv.* 8 ff.). If to the last the thought of actual conquests survived (cxlix. 6 ff.), a more spiritual conception of Israel's relation to the nations grew up

side by side with it. The Psalmist's gratitude for personal deliverance widens out into the prospect of the universal worship of Jehovah (xxii). Ps. lxvii expresses Israel's consciousness of its calling to be a blessing to the world, and the final purpose of its prosperity is the conversion of the nations. Zion becomes the spiritual metropolis in which nations once hostile are enrolled as citizens (lxxxvii); and Israel's deliverance from captivity is seen to lead to the universal worship of her Deliverer, and the gathering of the nations to Zion to serve Him (cii. 15, 21 ff.; cp. xcvi—xcviii).

Thus, even under the limitations of the old Covenant, were formed the hopes which are in part fulfilled, and in part still await fulfilment, in the Christian Church.

CHAPTER IX.

ON SOME POINTS IN THE THEOLOGY OF THE PSALMS.

A thorough examination of the Theology of the Psalms would exceed the limits of the present work. It would include an investigation whether any progress and development of doctrine can be traced in the Psalms of different periods. All that can be attempted here is a few brief notes on some points which require the student's attention or present special difficulties.

(i) *The relation of the Psalms to the Ordinances of Worship.* The Psalms represent the inward and spiritual side of the religion of Israel. They are the manifold expression of the intense devotion of pious souls to God, of the feelings of trust and hope and love which reach a climax in such Psalms as xxiii. xlii—xliii. lxiii. lxxxiv. They are the many-toned voice of prayer in the widest sense, as the soul's address to God in confession, petition, intercession, meditation, thanksgiving, praise, both in public and private. They offer the most complete proof, if proof were needed, how utterly false is the notion that the religion of Israel was a formal system of external rites and ceremonies. In such a book frequent reference to the external ordinances of worship is scarcely to be expected: but they are presumed,

and the experience of God's favour is constantly connected with the Sanctuary and its acts of worship[1].

There are frequent references to *the Temple* as the central place of worship, where men appear before God, and where He specially reveals His power glory and goodness, and interprets the ways of His Providence (xlii. 2; xlviii. 9; lxiii. 2; lxv. 4; lxviii. 29; lxxiii. 17; xcvi. 6 ff.; &c.).

The impressive splendour of the priestly array is alluded to (xxix. 2, note; xcvi. 9; cx. 3).

The delight of the festal pilgrimages to Zion is vividly described (xlii. xliii. lxxxiv. cp. lv. 14). Consuming zeal for God's house in a corrupt age characterised the saint and exposed him to persecution (lxix. 9).

The joyous character of the O. T. worship is so striking a feature of the Psalter as scarcely to need special notice. The Psalter as the hymn-book of the Second Temple was entitled 'The Book of Praises.' We hear the jubilant songs of the troops of pilgrims (xlii. 4; cp. Is. xxx. 29): we see the processions to the Temple with minstrels and singers (lxviii. 24, 25): we hear its courts resound with shouts of praise (xcv. 1 ff.; c. 1, 4), and music of harp and psaltery, timbrel and trumpet, cymbals and pipe.

Sacrifice is referred to as the sanction of the covenant between God and His people (l. 5; cp. Ex. xxiv. 5 ff.); as the regular accompaniment of approach to God (xx. 3; l. 8 ff.; lxvi. 13, 15; xcvi. 8); as the natural expression of worship and thanksgiving (xliii. 4; li. 19; liv. 6; cvii. 22; cxviii. 27), especially in connexion with vows (lvi. 12; lxvi. 13 ff.), which are frequently mentioned (xxii. 25; lxi. 5, 8; lxv. 1; lxxvi. 11; cxvi. 14, 18). The Levitical ceremonies of purification are alluded to as symbols of the inward cleansing which must be effected by God Himself (li. 7).

But the great prophetic doctrine[2] of the intrinsic worthlessness of sacrifice apart from the disposition of the worshipper is emphatically laid down. It is not sacrifice but obedience that

[1] Cp. Oehler, *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

[2] From 1 Sam. xv. 22 onwards. See Amos v. 21 ff.; Hos. vi. 6: Is. i. 11 ff.; Mic. vi. 6 ff.; Jer. vi. 20; vii. 21 ff.; xiv. 12.

God desires (xl. 6 ff.); it is not thank-offering, but a thankful heart which finds acceptance with Him (l. 14, 23; cp. lxix. 30, 31); it is not sacrifice, but contrition which is the condition of forgiveness (li. 16 ff.). Penitence and prayer are true sacrifices (li. 17; cxli. 2): and the moral conditions which can alone make sacrifice acceptable and are requisite for approach to God are constantly insisted upon (iv. 5; xv. 1 ff.; xxiv. 3 ff.; xxvi. 6; lxvi. 18).

It is God Himself who 'purges away' iniquity (lxv. 3; lxxviii. 38; lxxix. 9; lxxxv. 2).

(ii) *The self-righteousness of the Psalmists.* Readers of the Psalms are sometimes startled by assertions of integrity and innocence which appear to indicate a spirit of self-righteousness and self-satisfaction approximating to that of the Pharisee (Luke xviii. 9). Thus David appeals to be judged according to his righteousness and his integrity (vii. 8; cp. xxvi. 1 ff.), and regards his deliverance from his enemies as the reward of his righteousness and innocence (xviii. 20 ff.); sincerity and innocence are urged as grounds of answer to prayer (xvii. 1 ff.), and God's most searching scrutiny is invited (xxvi. 2 ff.).

Some of these utterances are no more than asseverations that the speaker is innocent of particular crimes laid to his charge by his enemies (vii. 3 ff.); others are general professions of purity of purpose and single-hearted devotion to God (xvii. 1 ff.). They are not to be compared with the self-complacency of the Pharisee, who prides himself on his superiority to the rest of the world, but to St Paul's assertions of conscious rectitude (Acts xx. 26 ff.; xxiii. 1). They breathe the spirit of simple faith and childlike trust, which throws itself unreservedly on God. Those who make them do not profess to be absolutely sinless, but they do claim to belong to the class of the righteous who may expect God's favour, and they do disclaim all fellowship with the wicked, from whom they expect to be distinguished in the course of His Providence.

And if God's present favour is expected as the reward of right conduct, it must be remembered that the Israelite looked for the visible manifestation of the divine government of the world in the reward of the godly and the punishment of the evildoer in this present life (1 Kings viii. 32, 39). He felt that he had a

right to be treated according to the rectitude of which he was conscious.

Further, it was commonly supposed that there was a proportion between sin and suffering; that exceptional suffering was an evidence of exceptional guilt. This idea throws light upon the assertions of national innocence in xliv. 17 ff., and of personal innocence in lix. 3. They are clearly relative, as much as to say, 'We know of no national apostasy which can account for this defeat as a well-merited judgment:' 'I am not conscious of any personal transgression for which this persecution is a fitting chastisement.' So Job repeatedly acknowledges the sinfulness of man, but denies that he has been guilty of any special sin to account for his extraordinary afflictions.

Some however of these utterances undoubtedly belong to the O. T. and not to the N.T. They are the partial expression of an eternal truth (Matt. xvi. 27), in a form which belongs to the age in which they were spoken. The N. T. has brought a new revelation of the nature of sin, and a more thorough self-knowledge: it teaches the inadmissibility of any plea of merit on man's part (Luke xvii. 10). But the docile spirit which fearlessly submits itself to the divine scrutiny and desires to be instructed (cxxxix. 23, 24) has nothing in common with the Pharisaism which is by its very nature incapable of improvement.

And side by side with these assertions of integrity we find in the Psalms the fullest recognition of personal sinfulness (li. 5; lxix. 5), of man's inability to justify himself before God (cxxx. 3 ff., cxliii. 2), of his need of pardon cleansing and renewal (xxxii. li. lxv. 3), of his dependence on God for preservation from sin (xix. 12 ff.), of the barrier which sin erects between him and God (lxvi. 18, l. 16 ff.); as well as the strongest expressions of absolute self-surrender and dependence on God and entire trust in His mercy (xxv. 4 ff., lxxiii. 25 ff.).

(iii) The so-called *Imprecatory Psalms* have long been felt to constitute one of the 'moral difficulties' of the O.T. We are startled to find the most lofty and spiritual meditations interrupted by passionate prayers for vengeance upon enemies, or ending in triumphant exultation at their destruction. How, we ask, can such utterances be part of a divine revelation? How

can the men who penned them have been in any sense inspired by the Holy Spirit?

These imprecations cannot be explained away, as some have thought, by rendering the verbs as futures, and regarding them as authoritative *declarations* of the certain fate of the wicked. Of these there are many, but in not a few cases the form of the verb is that which specifically expresses a wish or prayer, and it cannot be rendered as a simple future.

Nor again can the difficulty be removed by regarding the imprecations of Pss. lxix and cix as the curses not of the Psalmist himself but of his enemies. Even if this view were exegetically tenable for these two Psalms, which is doubtful, expressions of the same kind are scattered throughout the Psalter. Moreover the Book of Jeremiah contains prayers for vengeance on the prophet's enemies, which are at least as terrible as those of Pss. lxix and cix.

In what light then are these utterances to be regarded? They must be viewed as belonging to the dispensation of the Old Testament; they must be estimated from the standpoint of the Law, which was based upon the rule of retaliation, and not of the Gospel, which is animated by the principle of love; they belong to the spirit of Elijah, not of Christ; they use the language of the age which was taught to love its neighbour and hate its enemy (Matt. v. 43)[1].

Our Lord explicitly declared that the old dispensation, though not contrary to the new, was inferior to it; that modes of thought and actions were permitted or even enjoined which would not be allowable for His followers; that He had come to 'fulfil' the Law and the Prophets by raising all to a higher moral and spiritual level, expanding and completing what was rudimentary and imperfect (Matt. v. 43; xix. 8; Luke ix. 55).

It is essential then to endeavour to understand the ruling

[1] It is well to remember, on the other hand, that the Law inculcates service to an enemy (Ex. xxiii. 4, 5), and forbids hatred, vengeance and bearing of grudges (Lev. xix. 17, 18): and the Book of Proverbs bids men leave vengeance to God (xx. 22), and control their exultation at an enemy's misfortune (xxiv. 17; cp. Job xxxi. 29); and teaches that kindness is the best revenge (xxv. 21, 22). We have here the germ of Christian ethics.

ideas and the circumstances of the age in which these Psalms were composed, in order to realise how, from the point of view of that age, such prayers for vengeance and expressions of triumph as they contain could be regarded as justifiable.

In the first place it is important to observe that they are not dictated merely by private vindictiveness and personal thirst for revenge. While it would perhaps be too much to say that they contain no tinge of human passion (for the Psalmists were men of infirmity, and inspiration does not obliterate personal character), they rise to a far higher level. They spring ultimately from zeal for God's cause, and they express a willingness to leave vengeance in the hands of Him to whom it belongs. Retribution is desired and welcomed as part of the divine order (lviii. 11 ; civ. 35).

This was a great advance upon the ruder stage of society, in which each man claimed to be his own avenger. David's first impulse when he was insulted by Nabal was to wreak a terrible vengeance upon him and all that belonged to him. It was the natural instinct of the time. But his final resolve to leave vengeance to God indicated the better feeling that was being learnt (1 Sam. xxv. 21 ff., 39).

Though their form belongs to the circumstances and limitations of the age, these invocations of vengeance are the feeling after a truth of the divine government of the world. For it is the teaching of the N.T. not less than of the O.T. that the kingdom of God must come in judgment as well as in grace. Love no less than justice demands that there should be an ultimate distinction between the good and the evil, that those who will not submit to the laws of the kingdom should be banished from it (Matt. xiii. 49, 50; xvi. 27 ; John v. 29).

But while the Gospel proclaims the law of universal love, and bids men pray without ceasing for the establishment of the kingdom of God by the repentance and reformation even of the most hardened offenders, and leave the issue to the future judgment of God, the Law with its stern principle of retribution and its limitation of view to the present life, allowed men to pray for the establishment of the kingdom of God through the destruction of the wicked.

The Prophets and Psalmists of the O.T. had a keen sense of the great conflict constantly going on between good and evil, between God and His enemies[1]. That conflict was being waged in the world at large between Israel as the people of God and the nations which threatened to destroy Israel. The enemies of Israel were the enemies of Israel's God; Israel's defeat was a reproach to His Name; the cause at stake was not merely the existence of the nation, but the cause of divine truth and righteousness. This aspect of the conflict is most completely expressed in Ps. lxxxiii, and prayers for vengeance such as those of lxxix. 10, 12 and cxxxvii. 8 express the national desire for the vindication of a just cause, and the punishment of cruel insults.

Within the nation of Israel this same conflict was being waged on a smaller scale between the godly and the ungodly. When the righteous were oppressed and the wicked triumphant, it seemed as though God's rule were being set at nought, as though God's cause were losing. It was not only allowable but a duty to pray for its triumph, and that involved the destruction of the wicked who persisted in their wickedness. There must be no half-heartedness or compromise. In hatred as well as in love the man who fears God must be wholly on His side (cxxxix. 19—22). The perfect ruler resolves not only to choose the faithful in the land for his servants, but "morning by morning" to "destroy all the wicked of the land; to cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the LORD" (ci. 6—8); and it seemed only right and natural to pray that the Divine Ruler would do the same.

Further light is thrown on the Imprecatory Psalms by the consideration that there was as yet no revelation of a final judgment in which evil will receive its entire condemnation, or of a future state of rewards and punishments (see p. lxxv ff.). Men expected and desired to see a present and visible distinction between the righteous and the wicked, according to the law of the divine government (cxxv. 4, 5; cxlv. 20). It was part of God's lovingkindness not less than of His omnipotence to "reward

[1] See Rainy's *Development of Christian Doctrine*, p. 346, where there is a helpful treatment of the whole question.

every man according to his work" (lxii. 12). The sufferings of the godly and the prosperity of the ungodly formed one of the severest trials of faith and patience to those whose view was limited to the present life (Ps. xxxvii. lxxiii). Although God's sentence upon evil is constantly being executed in this world, it is often deferred and not immediately visible; and those who longed for the vindication of righteousness desired to have it executed promptly before their eyes. Hence the righteous could rejoice when he saw the wicked destroyed, for it was a manifest proof of the righteous government of Jehovah (lii. 5 ff.; liv. 7; lviii. 10, 11; xcii. 11).

Again, it must be remembered that we have been taught to distinguish between the evil man and evil: to love the sinner while we hate his sin. But Hebrew modes of thought were concrete. The man was identified with his wickedness; the one was a part of the other; they were inseparable. Clearly it was desirable that wickedness should be extirpated. How could this be done except by the destruction of the wicked man? What right had he to exist, if he persisted obstinately in his wickedness and refused to reform (l. 16 ff.)?

The imprecations which appear most terrible to us are those which include a man's kith and kin in his doom (lxix. 25; cix. 9 ff.). In order to estimate them rightly it must be borne in mind that a man's family was regarded as part of him. He lived on in his posterity: the sin of the parent was entailed upon the children: if the offence had been monstrous and abnormal, so ought the punishment to be. The defective conception of the rights of the individual, so justly insisted upon by Professor Mozley as one of the chief 'ruling ideas in early ages,' helps us to understand how not only the guilty man, but all his family, could be devoted to destruction[1].

Let it be noted too that what seems the most awful of all anathemas (lxix. 28) would not have been understood in the extreme sense which we attach to it: and some of the expressions which shock us most by their ferocity are metaphors derived from times of wild and savage warfare (lviii. 10; lxviii. 21 ff.). The noblest thoughts may coexist side by side with

[1] See Mozley's *Lectures on the Old Testament*, pp. 87 ff., 198 ff.

much that to a later age seems wholly barbarous and revolting.

These utterances then belong to the spirit of the O.T. and not of the N.T., and by it they must be judged. They belong to the age in which the martyr's dying prayer was not, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 60), but, "The Lord look upon it, and require it" (2 Chron. xxiv. 22). It is impossible that such language should be repeated in its old and literal sense by any follower of Him Who has bidden us to love our enemies and pray for them that persecute us.

Yet these utterances still have their lesson. On the one hand they may make us thankful that we live in the light of the Gospel and under the law of Love: on the other hand they testify to the punishment which the impenitent sinner deserves and must finally receive (Rom. vi. 23). They set an example of moral earnestness, of righteous indignation, of burning zeal for the cause of God. Men have need to beware lest in pity for the sinner they condone the sin, or relax the struggle against evil. The underlying truth is still true, that "the cause of sin shall go down, in the persons of those who maintain it, in such a manner as to throw back on them all the evil they have sought to do....This was waited for with inexpressible longing. It was fit it should be....This is not the only truth bearing on the point; but it is truth, and it was then the present truth[1]". It is in virtue of the truth which they contain that these Psalms can be regarded as 'inspired,' and their position in the records of divine revelation justified. Their fundamental motive and idea is the religious passion for justice; and it was by the Holy Spirit that their writers were taught to discern and grasp this essential truth; but the form in which they clothed their desire for its realisation belonged to the limitations and modes of thought of their particular age.

(iv) *The Future Life.* Death is never regarded in the O. T. as annihilation or the end of personal existence. But it is for the most part contemplated as the end of all that deserves to be called life. Existence continues, but all the joy and vigour of vitality are gone for ever (Is. xiv. 10; Ps. cxliii. 3=Lam. iii. 6).

[1] Rainy, p. 348.

Communion with God is at an end: the dead can no longer "see" Him: they cannot serve or praise Him in the silence of Sheol: His lovingkindness, faithfulness, and righteousness can no longer be experienced there. See Ps. vi. 5; xxx. 9; lxxxviii. 4, 5, 10—12; cxv. 17; Is. xxxviii. 11, 18: and numerous passages in Job, e.g. vii. 9; x. 21 ff.; xiv.

Death is the common lot of all, which none can escape (xlix. 7 ff.; lxxxix. 48), but the righteous and the wicked are distinguished by the manner of their death (lxxiii. 19). When death comes to a man in a good old age, and he leaves his children behind him to keep his name in remembrance, it may be borne with equanimity; but premature death is usually regarded as the sign of God's displeasure and the penal doom of the wicked (xxvi. 9), and childlessness is little better than annihilation.

To the oppressed and persecuted indeed Sheol is a welcome rest (Job iii. 17 ff.), and death may even be a gracious removal from coming evil (Is. lvii. 1, 2); but as a rule death is dreaded as the passage into the monotonous and hopeless gloom of the under-world.

The continuance of existence after death has no moral or religious element in it. It is practically non-existence. The dead man 'is not' (xxxix. 13). It offers neither encouragement nor warning. It brings no solution of the enigmas of the present life. There is no hope of happiness or fear of punishment in the world beyond.

This world was regarded as the scene of recompence and retribution. If reward and punishment did not come to the individual, they might be expected to come to his posterity. For the man lived on in his children: this was his real continuance in life, not the shadowy existence of Sheol: hence the bitterness of childlessness.

Nowhere in the Psalter do we find the hope of a Resurrection from the dead. The prophets speak of a national, and finally of a personal resurrection (Hos. vi. 1 ff.; Is. xxvi. 19; Ezek. xxxvii. 1 ff.; Dan. xii. 2), and predict the final destruction of death (Is. xxv. 8). But just where we should have expected to find such a hope as the ground of consolation, it is conspicuously absent[1].

[1] lvi. 13; lxviii. 20; xc. 3; cxli. 7, which are sometimes referred to,

Indeed it is set on one side as incredible (lxxxviii. 10). It is evident that there was as yet no revelation of a resurrection upon which men could rest; it was no article of the common religious belief to which the faithful naturally turned for comfort[1].

But do we not find that strong souls, at least in rare moments of exultant faith and hope, broke through the veil, and anticipated, not indeed the resurrection of the body, but translation through death into a true life of unending fellowship with God, like Enoch or Elijah?

Do not Pss. xvi, xvii, xlix, lxxiii, plainly speak of the hope of the righteous in his death?

The answer to this question is one of the most difficult problems of the theology of the Psalter. It can only be satisfactorily treated in the detailed exposition of the passages as they stand in their context. Some of the expressions which appear at first sight to imply a sure hope of deliverance from Sheol and of reception into the more immediate presence of God (e.g. xlix. 15, lxxiii. 24) are used elsewhere of temporal deliverance from death or protection from danger, and may mean no more than this (ix. 13, xviii. 16, xxx. 3, lxxxvi. 13, ciii. 4, cxxxviii. 7). Reading these passages in the light of fuller revelation we may easily assign to them a deeper and more precise meaning than their original authors and hearers understood. They adapt themselves so readily to Christian hope that we are easily led to believe that it was there from the first.

Unquestionably these Psalms (xvi, xvii, xlix, lxxiii) do contain the germ and principle of the doctrine of eternal life. It was present to the mind of the Spirit Who inspired their authors. The intimate fellowship with God of which they speak as man's highest good and truest happiness could not, in view of the nature and destiny of man and his relation to God, continue to be regarded as limited to this life and liable to sudden and final interruption. (See Matt. xxii. 31 ff.). It re-

cannot be interpreted of a resurrection. The text of xlviii. 14 is very uncertain; lxxxvi. 13 is a thanksgiving for deliverance from death; cxviii. 17 expresses the hope of such a deliverance.

[1] Contrast the precise statements in the *Psalms of Solomon*, quoted on p. xxxviii, where however it is only a resurrection of the righteous which is anticipated.

quired but a step forward to realise the truth of its permanence, but whether the Psalmists took this step is doubtful.

But even if they did, there was still no clear and explicit revelation on which the doctrine of a future life or of a resurrection could be based. It was but a 'postulate of faith,' a splendid hope, a personal and individual conclusion.

What was the meaning and purpose of this reserve in the teaching of the O. T.? Mankind had to be trained through long ages by this stern discipline to know the bitterness of death as the punishment of sin, and to trust God utterly in spite of all appearances. They had to be profoundly impressed with a sense of need and of the incompleteness of life here, in order that they might long for deliverance from this bondage and welcome it when it came (Heb. ii. 15). Nor could the revelation of the Resurrection and eternal life be made in fulness and certainty (so far as we can see) otherwise than through the victory of the second Adam who through death overcame death and opened unto us the gate of everlasting life (1 Cor. xv. 21 ff.).

Yet, as Delitzsch observes, there is nothing which comes to light in the New Testament which does not already exist in germ in the Psalms. The ideas of death and life are regarded by the Psalmists in their fundamental relation to the wrath and the love of God, in such a way that it is easy for Christian faith to appropriate and deepen, in the light of fuller revelation, all that is said of them in the Psalms. There is no contradiction of the Psalmist's thought, when the Christian as he prays substitutes hell for Hades in such a passage as vi. 5, for the Psalmist dreaded Hades only as the realm of wrath and separation from the love of God, which is the true life of man. Nor is there anything contrary to the mind of the authors in the application of xvii. 15 to the future vision of the face of God in all its glory, or of xlix. 14 to the Resurrection morning; for the hopes there expressed in moments of spiritual elevation can only find their full satisfaction in the world to come. The faint glimmerings of twilight in the eschatological darkness of the Old Testament are the first rays of the coming sunrise. And the Christian cannot refrain from passing beyond the

limits of the Psalmists, and understanding the Psalms according to the mind of the Spirit, whose purpose in the gradual revelation of salvation was ever directed towards the final consummation. Thus understood, the Psalms belong to the Israel of the New Testament not less than of the Old Testament.

The Church, in using the Psalms for its prayers, recognises the unity of the two Testaments: and scholarship, in expounding the Psalms, gives full weight to the difference between them. Both are right; the former in regarding the Psalms in the light of the one unchanging salvation, the latter in distinguishing the different periods and steps in which that salvation was historically revealed[1].

The sacred poetry of heathen religions, in spite of all that it contains of noble aspiration and pathetic "feeling after God," has ceased to be a living power. But "the Psalms of those far distant days, the early utterances of their faith and love, still form the staple of the worship and devotion of the Christian Church"... "The Vedic hymns are dead remains, known in their real spirit and meaning to a few students. The Psalms are as living as when they were written....They were composed in an age at least as immature as that of the singers of the Veda; but they are now what they have been for thirty centuries, the very life of spiritual religion—they suit the needs, they express, as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of 'the foremost in the files of time.'[2]"

[1] Delitzsch, *The Psalms*, p. 63.

[2] Dean Church, *The Sacred Poetry of Early Religions*, pp. 12, 38.

In the Psalms the soul turns inward on itself, and their great feature is that they are the expression of a large spiritual experience. They come straight from "the heart within the heart," and the secret depths of the spirit. Where, in those rough cruel days, did they come from, those piercing, lightning-like gleams of strange spiritual truth, those magnificent outlooks over the kingdom of God, those raptures at His presence and His glory, those wonderful disclosures of self-knowledge, those pure outpourings of the love of God? Surely here is something more than the mere working of the mind of man. Surely they tell of higher guiding, prepared for all time; surely, as we believe, they hear "the word behind them saying, This is the way, walk ye in it," they repeat the whispers of the Spirit of God, they reflect the very light of the Eternal Wisdom. In that wild time there must have been men sheltered and hidden amid the tumult round them, humble and faithful and true, to whom the Holy Ghost could open by degrees the "wondrous things of His law," whom He taught, and whose mouths He opened, to teach their brethren by their own experience, and to do each their part in the great preparation.

DEAN CHURCH.

THE PSALMS.

BOOK II.

PSALMS XLII—LXXII.

THE SECOND BOOK OF PSALMS.

THE Second and Third Books (Pss. xlii—lxxxix) form the second principal division of the Psalter. The greater part of it (Pss. xlii—lxxxiii) is known as the 'Elohistic' collection, because the appellative *Elōhīm*, 'God,' is employed throughout it in the place and almost to the exclusion of the proper name *Jehovah*, A.V. 'LORD' or 'GOD.' This peculiarity is due, in all probability, to the hand of the editor who made the collection by combining a selection of Psalms taken from three sources: (1) a collection of Psalms preserved and used by the Levitical family or guild of the Korahites: (2) a collection bearing the name of David: (3) a collection bearing the name of Asaph, and probably preserved in the family or guild of Asaph. To the Elohistic collection is attached an appendix containing Psalms taken from the Korahite hymnary and other sources, which have not been altered by the Elohistic editor. This collection, perhaps at first without, and afterwards with, the appendix, was probably at one time in circulation as a separate book. See *Introd.* pp. xxxix ff.

The first seven Psalms in Book ii (if we reckon xlii and xliii as one) are described in their titles as **of the sons of Korah**. This rendering of the R.V. is certainly to be preferred to that of the A.V. *for the sons of K.*, which is explained to mean that these Psalms were delivered to the Korahites to be set to music and performed; and the title indicates in all probability (see p. xxix) that the Psalms bearing it were taken from a collection

bearing some such name as "The Book of the Songs of the Sons of Korah."

Korah was the grandson of Kohath and great-grandson of Levi. When he perished for the part which he took in the famous rebellion against Moses, his family escaped (Num. xvi; xxvi. 11), and his descendants held important offices.

Korahites acted as sentinels of the camp of the Levites; they were warders of the sacred Tent erected by David[1]; and to them was assigned the office of porters or door-keepers of the Temple, which they resumed after the Return from Babylon (1 Chron. ix. 17 ff.; xxvi. 1 ff.; Neh. xi. 19)[2].

Korahites were also connected with the service of sacred song in the Temple. Heman, one of David's three principal musicians, was a Korahite (1 Chron. vi. 31—33), and his sons were the leaders of fourteen out of the twenty-four courses of Temple musicians (1 Chron. xxv. 4 ff.).

There is an allusion to them as singers in the history of the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 19), but in the post-exilic period they are only mentioned as door-keepers and not as musicians. Jehuel and Shimei, two of Heman's descendants, are named in 2 Chron. xxix. 14 as taking part in Hezekiah's reformation.

The common characteristics of the Korahite Psalms have been somewhat exaggerated. The collection includes, as we should expect a Levitical collection to do, Psalms which breathe a spirit of strong devotion to the Temple, and heartfelt delight in its services (xlii—xliii; lxxxiv), and Psalms which celebrate with enthusiastic pride the praise of Jerusalem as "the city of God," which He has chosen for His own abode, and in which He reigns as King (xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxxxvii). But these thoughts are not confined to these Psalms[3]; and other features have been pointed out as peculiar, which do not amount to *distinctive*

[1] It is uncertain whether the Korahites who joined David at Ziklag (1 Chron. xii. 6) belonged to the Levitical family, or to that of the Judahite Korah settled at Hebron (1 Chron. ii. 43).

[2] It is doubtful whether Ps. lxxxiv. 10 is really, as has been supposed, an allusion to this important office. See note on the passage.

[3] See *e.g.* for the first, Pss. lxiii, lxv; for the second, Ps. xxiv.

characteristics common to these Psalms as a group, or which, as in the case of the Divine names, are due to the editor, not to the original authors[1].

In fact the variety of thought and type in the Psalms included in this collection is more remarkable than their similarity. There are (1) *personal* Psalms, expressive of the most intense personal devotion (xlii—xliii, lxxxiv), and, if lxxxviii is included among the Korahite Psalms, a most pathetic prayer in a situation of the deepest distress: (2) *national* Psalms, of which one (xliv) is a prayer in time of grave calamity, others (xlvi—xlviii) are thanksgivings for a marvellous deliverance, another (lxxxv) is a combination of thanksgiving and prayer. (3) Ps. xlv is a congratulatory ode on the marriage of a king: Ps. xlix is a didactic poem, closely related (as is also lxxxviii) to the 'Wisdom literature': Ps. lxxxvii breathes the largest spirit of prophetic universalism. The Korahite Psalms form in fact a strikingly representative selection, though, as might be expected, the public and national elements predominate.

As regards the date of these Psalms, the group included in the Elohistic collection should be distinguished from the Psalms in the appendix to it. Of the former (xlii—xlix) some certainly belong to the time of the Monarchy (xlv, xlvi, xlviii); none are certainly later than the Fall of the Kingdom: of the latter, some may date from the time of the Monarchy, but one at least (lxxxv) is later than the Return.

[1] Thus though *Jehovah Tsebāōth* occurs six times in Korahite Pss. (xlvi. 7, 11; xlviii. 8; lxxxiv. 1, 3, 12) and only once besides in the Psalter (xxiv. 10), it is only found in three out of eleven Psalms, and of these two (xlvi, xlviii) are the work of the same poet. But in view of the alteration which the Divine names have undergone, it can hardly be distinguished from *Jehovah Elōhīm Tsebāōth*, which occurs not only in the Korahite Ps., lxxxiv. 8, but in a Davidic Ps., lix. 5, and an Asaphic Ps., lxxx. 4, 19, which also has *Elōhīm Tsebāōth* (*vv.* 7, 14), which can be nothing but the editorial equivalent for *Jehovah Tsebāōth*. The peculiar *Adonai Jehovah Tsebāōth* in lxix. 6 is probably due to the editor: the form in lxxxix. 8 is not unfrequent in the prophets.

PSALMS XLII AND XLIII.

These two Psalms form a connected poem, consisting of three equal stanzas, each ending with the same refrain. The same circumstances appear to lie in the background, and the tone, spirit, and language are the same throughout. The prayer of Ps. xliii is needed to supplement the complaint of Ps. xlii.

It is possible that some interval of time separated the composition of Ps. xliii from that of Ps. xlii, or even that they were the work of different poets, and that from the first they were separate poems; but it is far more probable that they are the work of the same poet, and that they originally formed one poem, which has been divided for liturgical or devotional purposes. This division is ancient, for it appears in the majority of Hebrew MSS., and in all Ancient Versions. In some MSS. the two Psalms appear to be united, but this may be due to the absence of any title to mark the beginning of Ps. xliii. The absence of a title, however, indicates that the division was made after the formation of the Elohistic collection, in which all the Psalms, with the exception of this and lxxi, are furnished with titles. See *Introd.*, p. xxxix.

The author of these Psalms was one who had been wont to conduct processions of pilgrims to the Temple for the great festivals with joyous songs of praise. But now he is forcibly debarred from going up to the worship of the sanctuary. He describes the locality where he is detained as "the land of Jordan and the range of Hermon," the district in which the Jordan takes its rise from the roots of Hermon. "Mount Mizar" was doubtless some hill in the neighbourhood, though it cannot now be identified. He is surrounded by inhuman heathen enemies (xliii. 1), who continually taunt him with being deserted by his God (xlii. 3, 10; xliii. 2). His faith is sorely tried; but he is confident that he will soon be allowed once more to go up to Jerusalem, and join in the services of the sanctuary.

Who was he and when did he live? The inclusion of the Psalm in the Korahite collection makes it probable that he was a Korahite Levite; and this probability is confirmed by his enthusiastic love for the Temple services, by the part he was accustomed to take in the festal pilgrimages, and by his skill as a musician (xlii. 8; xliii. 4). The Temple was standing and its services were being regularly carried on. So far however as this Psalm is concerned there is nothing to shew whether it was written before or after the Exile. But its close connexion with Ps. lxxxiv is in favour of assigning it to the earlier period. That Psalm presents such striking resemblances in tone and spirit, in language, and in structure, that it may well have been written by the same author under happier circumstances; and if *v.* 9 is understood (as it is most natural to understand it) as a prayer for the king, it must belong to the period of the monarchy. Ps. lxiii, and in a less degree Ps. lxi, which belong to the same period, also present affinities. The coincidences with Joel (see notes on xlii. 1, 3, and cp. lxxxiv. 6), and

the use of the Psalm in the prayer of Jonah (see on xlii. 7), are noteworthy, but in the uncertainty as to the date of these books, throw no additional light on the question. The circumstances under which the Psalmist found himself debarred from going up to Jerusalem and exposed to the taunts of heathen conquerors might have happened at many different periods, in one of the Syrian or Assyrian invasions, or after the northern kingdom had ceased to exist.

More definite conjectures as to the date lack probability. Delitzsch attributes the Psalm to a Korahite Levite who accompanied David in his flight to Mahanaim, in Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. xv. 24). But the Psalm contains no allusions to the circumstances of the rebellion; David was among sympathising friends, not among mocking heathen enemies; and Mahanaim was too distant from Hermon to suit the description of the locality in *v.* 6. Ewald thinks that the Psalm was written by Jehoiachin, as he halted for a night in the neighbourhood of Hermon on his way to exile in Babylon. But there is not the slightest hint that the Psalmist was a king: he does not appear to be an actual prisoner, or a mere temporary sojourner in the neighbourhood of Hermon: he expects soon to be able to go up to Jerusalem again, whereas Jehoiachin had nothing before him but the prospect of a life-long captivity. Hitzig, followed so far as the date is concerned by Cheyne, attributes the Psalm to the high-priest Onias iii, whom he supposes to have been carried away prisoner by the Egyptian general Scopas, when after the capture of Jerusalem he marched northwards to be defeated by Antiochus the Great, near the source of the Jordan (Jos. *Antiq.* xii. 3. 3), in B.C. 199—198. But the inclusion of the Psalm in the Elohistic collection, to say nothing of the arguments already given for assigning the Psalm to the period of the monarchy, renders so late a date extremely improbable. See Intr. to Ps. xliv.

Happily the poetic beauty and the devotional earnestness of the Psalm are independent of all doubts as to its date and authorship. It is a monument of the spirituality and the joyousness of the religion of Israel. If the writer yearns for renewed access to the earthly sanctuary, it is that in the appointed place and by the appointed means he may realise that communion with God which is the soul's highest happiness. The Latin hymn *Ut iucundas cervus undas* (Trench, *Sacred Latin Poetry*, No. liii) is a beautiful development of the theme of this Psalm.

The structure of the poem is symmetrical and artistic. It consists of three equal stanzas, each closed by the same refrain. Many of the lines fall into the peculiar 'lamentation-rhythm.'

i. The yearning of the Psalmist's soul for God strikes the keynote of the Psalm (1, 2): and in his present sorrow he finds sad comfort in the recollection of former happiness (3, 4).

ii. He describes his pitiable plight (6, 7); and recalling past mercies, expostulates with God for having abandoned him to the taunts of his foes (8—10).

iii. He prays for deliverance from these enemies (xliii. 1, 2), and restoration to the privileges of the sanctuary (3, 4).

In the refrain which closes each stanza faith rebukes despondency and hope triumphs over despair (5, 11, xliii. 5).

Psalm XLII.

To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah.

42 As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:
When shall I come and appear before God?
3 My tears have been my meat day and night,
While *they* continually say unto me, Where *is* thy God?

On the title, which should be rendered, with R.V., **For the Chief Musician; Maschil of the sons of Korah**, see *Introd.* pp. xviii, xix, xxvi, and p. 223.

1, 2. The yearning of the Psalmist's soul for communion with God.

1. As a hind which panteth for water-brooks,
So panteth my soul for Thee, O God.

Render **hind**, not *hart*, for the verb is feminine, and the timorous hind is the apter emblem for the soul. The parallel in Joel i. 20 (the only other instance of the verb) makes it clear that the figure is suggested by the sufferings of wild animals in a prolonged drought (cp. Jer. xiv. 5 f.), not by the hind "heated in the chase," and deterred by the fear of its pursuers from descending into the valley to slake its thirst.

2. *thirsteth*] Cp. lxiii. 1; Am. viii. 11—13. God, who is *the living God*, in contrast to dead impotent idols, is "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13). With Him is "the fountain of life," and He gives men drink from the stream of His delights (xxxvi. 8, 9). The phrase for 'living God' (*El chay*) is found elsewhere only in Josh. iii. 10; Ps. lxxxiv. 2; Hos. i. 10. In Deut. v. 26; 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36; 2 Kings xix. 4, 16 (=Is. xxxvii. 4, 17); Jer. x. 10, xxiii. 36; the Heb. word for God is *Elōhim*.

appear before God] The regular formula for the stated visits to the Temple at the three great Festivals (Ex. xxiii. 17; Ps. lxxxiv. 7). Grammatical considerations however make it probable that here and in some other passages (e.g. Ex. xxiii. 15; xxxiv. 20; Deut. xxxi. 11; Is. i. 12) we should read, by a simple change of the vowel-points, *see the face of God*. The usual phrase for admission to the presence of a superior (Gen. xliii. 3) was applied to visiting the sanctuary; but since man cannot literally *see God* (Ex. xxxiii. 20), it was supplemented by the synonymous phrase *appear before God*, which came to be generally adopted as more seemly in the traditional method of reading the consonantal text. But cp. xi. 7 note; xvii. 15; lxiii. 2.

3, 4. Present sorrow contrasted with past happiness.

3. *my meat*] Lit. *my bread*. Cp. lxxx. 5; cii. 4, 9. Tears take the place of his daily food. So Ovid, *Metam.* x. 75, "Cura dolorque animi lacrimaeque alimenta fuere."

continually] Lit. *all the day*, and so in *v.* 10.

Where is *thy God*] Cp. lxxix. 10; cxv. 2; Joel ii. 17; Mic. vii. 10.

When I remember these *things*, I pour out my soul in me: 4
For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to
the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise, *with* a multitude that kept
holyday.
Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and *why* art thou 5
disquieted in me?

The bitterest ingredient in his cup of sorrow is the taunt of the heathen that his plight demonstrates the impotence or indifference of the God Whom he serves.

4. This let me remember as I pour out my soul upon me,
How I was wont to pass on with the throng, leading them to the house of God,
With the voice of singing and thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival.

He must needs give free course to his feelings, to the emotional part of his nature, as he thinks of the past. The renderings *in me* (A.V.) or *within me* (R.V.) miss the idiomatic force of the preposition which means *upon me*. The soul (as elsewhere the heart or the spirit) is distinguished from a man's whole 'self,' and regarded as acting upon it from without. See Delitzsch, *Biblical Psychology*, pp. 179 ff. Cp. *vv.* 5, 6, 11, xliii. 5; cxxxi. 2; cxlii. 3; Lam. iii. 20; Job xxx. 16; Jer. viii. 18.

How I was wont to pass on. The tense denotes that it was his *custom* thus to conduct pilgrims to Jerusalem for the festivals. The joyousness of these processions was proverbial (Is. xxx. 29; cp. xxxv. 10; li. 11).

But what is the connexion of thought? Is it that he indulges in the recollection of the past, as a luxury of grief, because "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things"? Or is it not rather that the retrospect is the best antidote to the sneers of the heathen? The God, in Whose service he once found such delight, cannot really have deserted him. The verse will then form the natural transition to *v.* 5. Cp. *v.* 6, and lxxvii. 11.

Leading them. The word is found elsewhere only in Is. xxxviii. 15. It seems to denote the slow and stately march of a solemn procession, and may be rendered as in R.V. marg. *went in procession with them*, or, with a slight change of vowels, taken transitively.

5. In this refrain the truer 'self' chides the weaker 'soul,' the emotional nature, for its despondency and complaint.

cast down] Bowed down as a mourner. Cp. xxxv. 14; xxxviii. 6.

The resemblance of our Lord's words in Gethsemane (Matt. xxvi. 38; Mk. xiv. 34) to the Sept. rendering of this verse, *Why art thou exceeding sorrowful, O my soul?* (ἵνα τί περίλυπος εἶ, ἡ ψυχή;) suggests that this Psalm may have been in His mind at the time; the more so as He appears to use the words of *v.* 6, which the Sept. renders, *My soul is troubled* (ἡ ψυχή μου ἐταράχθη), in a similar connexion upon another

Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him
For the help of his countenance.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee
From the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

occasion (John xii. 27). In view of this it is interesting to remember that the hart is a common emblem for our Lord in Christian art.

disquieted in me] Lit. *moanest*, or *frettest upon me*, the same idiom as in *v.* 4. Cp. lxxvii. 3; Jer. iv. 19.

hope thou in God] Or, *wait thou for God*. Cp. xxxviii. 15; xxxix. 7; Mic. vii. 7.

praise him] Or, **give him thanks**, as in past time (*v.* 4).

for *the help of his countenance*] This is the reading of the Massoretic Text. But the construction is peculiar, and the LXX and Syr. suggest that we ought to read here as in *v.* 11, and xliii. 5, **(Who is) the help of my countenance and my God**. But *O my God* should be retained at the beginning of *v.* 6, where it is needed[1]. *The help* (lit. *salvations*, the plur. denoting manifold and great deliverances, as in xxviii. 8) *of my countenance* is a periphrasis for *my help*, facilitated by phrases like *to look upon* or *turn away the face* of a person (lxxxiv. 9; cxxxii. 10).

6—11. From self he turns to God and pleads his cause.

6. *Within me*, or rather, as in *v.* 4, **upon me**, stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence. His own feelings overwhelm him, and therefore he must turn to God, whose goodness he can call to mind, remote though he is from the place where God's presence is specially manifested. He describes the place from which he speaks as **the land of Jordan and the Hermons**, probably the neighbourhood of Dan (*Tell-el-Kadi*) or Caesarea Philippi (*Banias*), where the Jordan rises from the roots of Hermon. The plural *Hermons* either denotes the Hermon range in general or refers to the three peaks in which Mount Hermon culminates. *The hill Mizar* or **mount Mizar** was probably some hill in the immediate neighbourhood of which he was[2]; perhaps some point whence he could command a view of the hills beyond the Jordan, over which he would fain be travelling to Jerusalem. Its name—*the little mountain*—may perhaps be meant to contrast its insignificance with the fame and splendour of God's holy mountain where he desires to be (xliii. 3; xlviii. 1, 2).

[1] The error arose very simply from the transference of the ן from the beginning of ואלהי to the end of פני, so that פני ואלהי became פניו אלהי. Then אלהי was assumed to be merely an accidental repetition of אלהי at the beginning of *v.* 6, and dropped out.

[2] Prof. G. A. Smith notes that there are in the same neighbourhood "two or three names with the same or kindred radicals," and suggests that they may be "a reminiscence of the name of a hill in this district." *Hist. Geogr. of the Holy Land*, p. 477.

Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: 7
All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.
Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the day- 8
time,
And in the night his song *shall be* with me,
And my prayer unto the God of my life.

7. *at the noise of thy waterspouts*] Better, **in the roar of thy cataracts.** God is sending upon him one trouble after another. He is overwhelmed with a flood of misfortunes. The metaphorical language is derived from the surrounding scenery. The roar of the cataracts calling to one another from opposite sides of the valley is like the voice of one abyss of waters (xxxiii. 7 note) summoning another to break forth and join in overwhelming him. The torrents and eddies of the Jordan suggest the breakers and waves of calamity which have gone over his head. Tristram in describing Banias speaks of "the impetuous stream which has hewn out its channel in the black basalt," and of the "wild medley of cascades and dashing torrents" everywhere (*Land of Israel*, p. 573). According to Robinson (*Researches*, iii. 405) "in the rainy season, and at the time of the melting of the snow on Hermon, an immense volume of water must rush down the chasm" below the ridge on which the castle stands. It might be supposed that the figure of *breakers and waves* must have been suggested by the sea, but no one who has seen mountain streams in spate will doubt that the words might refer to the Jordan in flood. The winter rainfall in Palestine is enormous. See Tristram's *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 31.

v. 7 *b* is borrowed in Jonah's prayer (Jon. ii. 3).

8. According to the rendering of the A.V., retained by the R.V., this verse expresses the Psalmist's confidence that he will soon again experience the favour of God, and give Him thanks for His goodness. But it is equally possible to render

Jehovah used to give his lovingkindness charge concerning me,
And in the night his song was with me,
Even prayer unto the God of my life.

This rendering gives the best connexion of thought. The verse is a retrospect like *v.* 4, and is a further explanation of the 'remembering God' of which he speaks in *v.* 6. He contrasts the present, in which tears are his constant food (*v.* 3) and God's indignation seems to be let loose upon him, with the past, in which God's lovingkindness constantly watched over him, and glad songs of praise to Him were his constant companions. *In the day-time* and *in the night*, though divided between the two lines for rhythmical reasons, are to be connected together (=*continually*), and taken as referring equally to both clauses. Cp. xcii. 2. God's lovingkindness, like His light and truth in xliii. 3, is almost personified as the Psalmist's guardian angel.

Prayer denotes any form of communion with God—here predominantly thanksgiving. Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 1; Hab. iii. 1.

With the beautiful phrase *the God of my life* cp. lxvi. 9; and Ecclesi-

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the
enemy?
10 *As* with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me;
While they say daily unto me, Where *is* thy God?
11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou
disquieted within me?
Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

asticus xxiii. 1, 4, "O Lord, Father and Master" (δέσποτα) of my life":..."Father and God of my life."

The LORD] Contrary to the general rule in Book ii (*Introd.* p. xl) the name JEHOVAH has been retained here; unless it is the insertion or alteration of a later editor.

9—11. Having thus recalled God's mercy in the past he expostulates with Him for having abandoned him, and exposed him to the sneers of his enemies.

9. *I will say*] Or, *Let me say*, the tense (voluntative, as in *v.* 4) emphatically expressing his resolution.

my rock] The word, lit. my *cliff* or *crag* (*sela*), is used of God as a refuge only in xviii. 2 (=2 Sam. xxii. 2); xxxi. 3 (=lxxi. 3). On the more common word for *rock* (*tsūr*) see note on xviii. 2 (A.V. *my strength*).

The original edition of the A.V. (1611) has *unto God, My rock, why*; treating *my rock* as a vocative, with LXX and Jerome. Editions of 1612 and 1630 have *God, my rock, why*: and the usual punctuation *God my rock, Why* appears to have been introduced in editions of 1629, 1638. See Scrivener, *Authorised Ed. of the English Bible*, p. 165.

Why &c.] Not a demand for explanation, but the expostulation of perplexity. Cp. xiii. 1; xxii. 1; lxxvii. 9; lxxxviii. 14.

mourning] Cp. xxxv. 14, xxxviii. 6; Job xxx. 28.

because of the oppression of the enemy] Or, as R.V. marg. (cp. P.B.V.), *while the enemy oppresseth*. The substantive occurs in the Psalter only here and in xliii. 2; xliv. 24; the verb only in lvi. 1; cvi. 42. Both are used elsewhere, especially of the oppression of Israel by foreign invaders (Jud. ii. 18; 1 Sam. x. 18; 2 Kings xiii. 4; Am. vi. 14; &c.).

10. My bones are smitten asunder with mine adversaries' reproaches,
While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

Lit. *with crushing in my bones do mine adversaries reproach me.* They stab him to the heart with their taunts. 'The bones,' in the language of Hebrew poetry, denote the whole physical organism of the living man, as being the framework of it. They are the seat of pain; and mental torture affects the body. Cp. vi. 2 (note); Lam. iii. 4; Is. xxxviii. 13.

PSALM XLIII.

Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly 43
nation:
O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.
For thou *art* the God of my strength: why dost thou cast 2
me off?
Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the
enemy?
O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; 3
Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.
Then will I go unto the altar of God, 4

xliii. 1—5. A passionate prayer for deliverance from his enemies and restoration to the privileges of the sanctuary.

1, 2. Prayer for deliverance, grounded upon God's relation to him.

1. *Judge me* &c.] An appeal to God the Judge to do him justice and vindicate his innocence by delivering him from the power of his insolent foes. For the language cp. vii. 8; xxvi. 1; xxxv. 1, 24.

against an ungodly nation] Lit. *from*, i.e. by delivering me from, *a nation without lovingkindness*; heathen destitute of all feeling of humanity. For the meaning of *chāsīd* see notes on iv. 3; xii. 1; and Appendix, Note i.

the deceitful and unjust man] The leader of the heathen, who had distinguished himself by treachery and malignity, may be meant. But it is better to understand the words collectively as a further description of the 'inhuman nation' in general, **men of deceit and malignity.**

2. *the God of my strength*] Or, **my stronghold God**: my natural refuge and protector. Cp. xviii. 2; xlii. 9. But facts seem to contradict faith, and the expostulation of xlii. 9 is repeated in a stronger form: **Why hast thou cast me off** (xliv. 9, 23)? and in the next line a more emphatic form of the verb *go* is used, meaning *go about by myself.*

3, 4. Prayer for restoration.

3. *O send out thy light and thy truth*] Cp. lvii. 3. God's light and truth, like His lovingkindness in xlii. 8, are almost personified. As of old He gave His lovingkindness charge concerning His servant, so now may He manifest the light of His countenance, and evermore shew him favour (xxxvi. 9; xliv. 3); and thus prove Himself true to His own character and His promises.

let them lead me &c.] Is the Psalmist thinking of the wonders of the Exodus? Cp. Ex. xiii. 21; xv. 13.

tabernacles] Or, *dwelling-place*. Cp. xxvi. 8; xlvi. 4; lxxxiv. 1. The plural may be 'amplificative,' expressive of the dignity of the Temple as the dwelling-place of God; or it may be used with reference to the various courts and buildings of which it was composed.

4. *Then will I go*] Or, **That I may come** (xlii. 2).

Unto God my exceeding joy:
Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou
disquieted within me?
Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him,
Who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

unto God my exceeding joy] **Even unto the God of my gladsome rejoicing.** God Himself is the goal of pilgrimage: the altar is but the means of approaching Him and realising His presence.

Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee] **And give thanks unto thee upon the harp,** as of old (xlii. 4).

O God my God] A phrase found only in the Elohistic Psalms, and clearly the equivalent of *Jehovah my God*, due, not to the original Psalmist, but to the Elohistic editor. See *Introd.* p. xli.

5. The refrain is once more repeated, and now, we may believe, with a still more unwavering faith and certain hope that his prayer will be answered.

PSALM XLIV.

This Psalm is the appeal of the nation to God in a time of unmerited disaster and humiliation.

i. It begins by recalling the mighty deeds of God for His people in the days of old. It was God Himself who drove out the nations from Canaan, and planted Israel in their place. By His might and not by their own valour was the victory won (1—3).

ii. From the past they have been wont to draw assurance for the present. To Him they still trust for victory and not to themselves, for He is their King and they are His loyal subjects (4—8).

iii. But facts contradict faith. God has surrendered them to their enemies, and abandoned them to the scorn and derision of neighbouring nations (9—16).

iv. And this suffering is undeserved. No faithlessness on their part accounts for it as a punishment. Nay, it is for His sake that they are being persecuted (17—22).

v. The Psalm closes with an urgent appeal for speedy help (23—26).

This Psalm is one of those which have most generally and most confidently been assigned to the Maccabaean period. It is argued that the general tone of the Psalm and the reference to the dispersion of the nation (*v.* 11) prove it to be post-exilic; that we know of no earlier time in the post-exilic period when the nation possessed an army (*v.* 9); that then, as never before, it could plead its fidelity to Jehovah. The persecution of Antiochus[1] was preeminently a religious persecution, in which the Jews were slaughtered and sold into slavery by thousands for their faith's sake. They were fighting not only for their lives but for their laws.

Those however who assign the Psalm to the Maccabaean period are not agreed as to the particular occasion to which it refers. The most plausible suggestion is that which connects it with the reverse sustained by Judas at Beth-Zachariah, which was followed by the surrender of Beth-zur, and the reduction of the defenders of the Temple to the greatest extremities (1 Macc. vi. 28 ff.). It cannot refer to the early days of the persecution of Antiochus, for then the Jews had no army: nor to the defeat of Joseph and Azariah at Jamnia (1 Macc. v. 56 ff.), for that defeat was the result of self-willed disobedience, and arrogant self-assertion (*v.* 61): nor to disasters after the death of Judas (1 Macc. ix), for the alliance which he had just contracted with Rome (1 Macc. viii) was incompatible with that exclusive reliance upon Jehovah which the Psalmist so emphatically professes.

No doubt many of the features of the Psalm seem to reflect the circumstances of the Maccabaean period. But the closeness of the correspondence has been exaggerated. Could the Psalmist protest that the nation was faithful to its God, when the high-priest Jason had but recently introduced Greek customs into Jerusalem, and been followed by a multitude of willing apostates (1 Macc. i. 11 ff.)? Moreover, although an argument from silence is precarious, it would certainly be strange that a Psalm of the Maccabaean period should contain no reference to the desecration of the Temple, or to the attempt to destroy the national religion and enforce heathen customs.

The most convincing argument however against a Maccabaean date for this Psalm is to be derived from the history of the formation of the Psalter. The 'Elohistic' collection in which it is found was certainly anterior to the collections contained in Books iv and v (*Introd.* pp. xl ff.), and must on any hypothesis have been formed earlier than the Maccabaean age, while the subordinate collections which are incorporated in it carry us back to an earlier date still. Now while it is *possible* that a Maccabaean Psalmist might have "thrown himself into the spirit of the original collector and made his additions Elohistic to correspond to the earlier Psalms," and might even have furnished the Psalm with a title which no longer had any meaning, it is, to say the least, extremely improbable[1]. The internal indications of a Maccabaean date must be overwhelming in order to justify such a bold hypothesis.

It is however easier to arrive at the negative conclusion that the Maccabaean date is untenable than to suggest a satisfactory alternative. Delitzsch connects this Psalm with Ps. lx, and accepting the title of that Psalm as trustworthy, supposes that the occasion of both Psalms was an Edomite raid upon Judah while David was occupied with his campaign against the Ammonites and Syrians. There is certainly a remarkable affinity between this Psalm and Ps. lx; and in David's reign the people could boast of their faithfulness to Jehovah in marked contrast to the

[1] See Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in Jewish Church*, ed. 2, pp. 207, 437. Sanday, *Bampton Lectures*, pp. 256, 270, draws out in detail the number of steps implied between the original composition of the Hebrew Psalm and the Greek Version of the Psalter, and shews that if, as many believe, the Greek Version of the Psalter is not later than B.C. 100, it is almost incredible that they can have been compressed into a space of seventy years.

repeated apostasies of the age of the Judges. Lagarde points to the close resemblance between *v.* 16 and Is. xxxvii. 6, 23, 24, and assigns the Psalm to the time of Sennacherib's invasion. Robertson Smith (*O. T. J. C.*, ed. 2, p. 207) refers it, along with Pss. lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx, to the rebellion of the Jews under Artaxerxes Ochus (*circa* 350 B.C.), which was put down with great severity.

It is impossible to decide with certainty; but the Psalm produces a strong impression that it belongs to the time when Israel had still an independent existence as a nation, and was accustomed to make war upon its enemies. If so, it must be assigned to the period of the Monarchy, for at no time after the exile, so far as we know, down to the Maccabaean period, was Israel in a position to make war. The exile is not necessarily presumed by *v.* 11. All that the verse need mean is that prisoners had been taken and sold for slaves, as was the case in the eighth century (Amos i. 6, 9), and doubtless in earlier times.

The Psalm stands alone in its confident assertions of national fidelity to Jehovah, which may be contrasted with the confessions of national guilt in Is. lxiii, lxiv, and Lam. iii. But it must be noticed carefully that it is not an absolute but a relative assertion of innocence. It resembles that of Job. He made no claim of absolute sinlessness, but protested that he was conscious of no exceptional sin which would account for his exceptional afflictions on the current theory of retribution; and the Psalmist is conscious of no national apostasy which would account for Jehovah's desertion of His people as a justly merited punishment.

The parallels with Ps. lx should be carefully studied. The situation is similar: in both Psalms the thought of God, not man, as the deliverer is prominent: and there are several parallels of language. Comp. xliv. 9, 23 with lx. 1, 10; xliv. 5 with lx. 12; xliv. 3 with lx. 5. Several links of connexion with Pss. xlii, xliii will also be found in the notes.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil.

44 We have heard with our ears, O God,
Our fathers have told us,

On the title, which should be rendered with R.V., **For the Chief Musician**; (**a Psalm**) **of the sons of Korah. Maschil**, see *Introd.* pp. xviii, xix, xxvi; and p. 223.

1—3. A retrospect. Not their own valour but God's help and favour gave Israel possession of the land of Canaan.

1. *our fathers have told us*] In obedience to the often repeated injunction to hand on the memory of God's marvellous works on behalf of His people. See Ex. x. 2; xii. 26 f.; xiii. 8, 14; Deut. vi. 20; Josh. iv. 6, 21. Cp. Judg. vi. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 3. Observe the importance attached to oral tradition as a means of perpetuating the memory of the past. Much of the early history of Israel was doubtless preserved by oral tradition for a long period before it was committed to writing.

What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.
How thou didst drive out the heathen *with* thy hand, and 2
plantedst them;
How thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.
For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, 3
Neither did their own arm save them:
But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy
countenance,
Because thou hadst a favour unto them.
Thou *art* my King, O God: 4
Command deliverances for Jacob.

in the times of old] Better, **even the days of old.** Cp. Is. xxxvii. 26 (A.V., *of ancient times*).

2. With thine own hand didst thou dispossess nations, and plant them in,
Didst afflict peoples, and cause them to spread abroad.

Thou with thy hand are the first words of the verse in the Heb., emphasising by their position the prominent thought of this stanza, that Israel owed its possession of Canaan not to its own courage but to Jehovah's help. The metaphor of *planting* is frequently applied to the establishment of Israel in Canaan (cp. Ex. xv. 17; 2 Sam. vii. 10), and it is continued in the next line, where the rendering **cause them to spread abroad** is commended by the usage of the word and by the parallelism. Israel is compared to a tree which struck root and spread its branches far and wide. Cp. lxxx. 8 ff, 11. Note the artistic parallelism, the first clause in each line referring to the nations, the second to Israel.

3. The thought of the preceding verse is still further emphasised.
For not by their own sword gat they possession of the land,
Neither did their own arm give them victory:
But thy right hand, &c.
Cp. lx. 5; Josh. iv. 24.

the light of thy countenance] Cp. iv. 6; xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3, 7, 19; and the Aaronic benediction in Num. vi. 24 ff.

hadst a favour unto them] God's free choice, not Israel's merit, was the ground of His intervention on their behalf. Cp. Deut. iv. 37; viii. 17, 18; ix. 4, 6.

4—8. The recollection of the past gives confidence for the present and the future. God's strength must still avail for the deliverance of His people, and in Him alone do they trust.

4. *my King*] Cp. xlvii. 6; lxxiv. 12; 1 Sam. xii. 12. The Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation.

command] Cp. xlii. 8. It is the duty of a king to defend his people (1 Sam. x. 19); and the authority of the divine King is supreme. He has but to speak the word and it must needs be obeyed.

deliverances] R.V. **deliverance**, marg., **victories** (cp. *v.* 3). The

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies:
Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.
6 For I will not trust in my bow,
Neither shall my sword save me.
7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies,
And hast put them to shame that hated us.
8 In God we boast all the day long,
And praise thy name for ever. Selah.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame;
And goest not forth with our armies.

Heb. word is plural, denoting deliverance full and complete. Cp. xviii. 50; xlii. 5 (note).

5. *push down*] Perhaps a reminiscence of Deut. xxxiii. 17; but metaphors from horned animals are common. Cp. 1 Kings xxii. 11.

our enemies] R.V. **our adversaries**, and similarly in *vv.* 7, 10, the Heb. word being different from that in *v.* 16.

through thy name] Relying upon all that Thou hast revealed Thyself to be as the God of Israel:—an emphatic alternative for *through Thee*. The Name of God is the compendious expression for His revealed character and attributes. See Oehler's *O.T. Theology*, § 56. Cp. v. 11; xx. 1; Acts iii. 16.

6. Cp. xx. 7; xxxiii. 16; lx. 11 f; 1 Sam. xvii. 47; Hos. i. 7; and the noble speech of Judas Maccabaeus (1 Macc. iii. 17 ff.); "The victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven."

7. *But*] Or, **For.** Past experience justifies the confidence of *v.* 6.

them...that hated us] R.V., **them...that hate us.** Cp. *v.* 10.

8. Of God have we made our boast all day long,
And unto thy name will we give thanks for ever.

God has been the object of their praises in the past, and to Him they are resolved to give thanks (xlii. 5) continually.

A musical interlude marks the conclusion of the first main division of the Psalm.

9—16. But the present circumstances of the nation contradict these expressions of faith based upon past experience. Israel is abandoned to be the scorn and prey of its foes. Comp. the transition in lxxxix. 38.

9. *But now*] The conjunction is peculiar, and implies surprise. **And then**, after all these proofs of Thy good will, and in spite of our loyalty to Thee, **hast thou cast us off and dishonoured us, and goest not forth with our hosts**; leading them to victory as in the days of old, as the God of the armies of Israel. Almost the same words recur in lx. 10. In ancient times the Ark was carried to battle as the symbol of Jehovah's presence. See Num. x. 35; Josh. vi. 6; 1 Sam. iv. 3; 2 Sam. xi. 11. Cp. also Judg. vi. 14; 2 Sam. v. 24.

Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: 10
And they which hate us spoil for themselves.
Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; 11
And hast scattered us among the heathen.
Thou sellest thy people for nought, 12
And dost not increase *thy wealth* by their price.
Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, 13
A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, 14
A shaking of the head among the people.
My confusion *is* continually before me, 15
And the shame of my face hath covered me,

10. *the enemy*] R.V., **the adversary.**

spoil for themselves] Or, **plunder at their will.**

11. Some of God's people are butchered like sheep (cp. *v.* 22); others are sold as slaves. It is evidently not a deportation of the nation that is meant, but the sale of prisoners of war for slaves. Cp. Joel iii. 2, 6; Am. i. 6, 9. To the Israelite with his love of freedom and attachment to his own land such a fate seemed little better than death.

12. *Thou sellest thy people*] Handing them over to their enemies (Deut. xxxii. 30; Judg. ii. 14; Is. l. 1); and that *for nought*, as though they were worthless in Thy estimation (Jer. xv. 13): *and hast made no gain by their price*; a bold 'anthropopathy,' or ascription to God of human motives and feelings, as though the surrender of His people might have seemed more justifiable if He had received some equivalent for them. Comp. the plea in xxx. 9.

13. Repeated almost verbatim in lxxix. 4; cp. lxxx. 6. The neighbouring nations, Philistines, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, were always jealous of Israel, and ready to rejoice with a malicious delight at Israel's humiliation.

14. *the heathen...the people*] Render with R.V., **the nations...the peoples.** They point to our fate as a proverbial instance of a people abandoned by its God, and make us the subject of taunting songs: they shake their heads at us in derision. Cp. Deut. xxviii. 37; 1 Kings ix. 7; Jer. xxiv. 9; Joel ii. 17 (R.V. marg.); Ps. xxii. 7; and generally Lam. ii. 15 ff.

15. *My confusion* &c.] Render with R.V., **All the day long is my dishonour before me,** as in *vv.* 8, 22, 9. My disgrace is perpetually staring me in the face. Cp. xxxviii. 17.

the shame of my face &c.] Shame is said to cover or clothe a man (Job viii. 22; Ps. xxxv. 26; lxix. 7; cxxxii. 18); and *the shame of my face* is an emphatic synonym for *my shame*, inasmuch as the sense of shame betrays itself in the countenance. Cp. Ezra ix. 6 ff; Jer. vii. 19; Dan. ix. 7, 8.

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth;
By reason of the enemy and avenger.
17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee,
Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.
18 Our heart is not turned back,
Neither have our steps declined from thy way;
19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons,

16. *For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth*] The word *reproach* is frequently used of a heathen enemy's scornful defiance or mocking derision of Israel and Israelites, and by consequence of Israel's God, as though He were unable or unwilling to defend His people (xlii. 10; lxxiv. 10, 18, 22; lxxix. 4, 12; 1 Sam. xvii. 10 ff.); but the two words are found in combination elsewhere only of Sennacherib's blasphemous defiance (Is. xxxvii. 6, 23 = 2 Kings xix. 6, 22).

by reason of] Render **for the looks of**, or, **for the presence of**, as a better parallelism to *for the voice of*. Isaiah alludes to the terror inspired by the grim looks of the Assyrian invaders (xxxiii. 19); and for *voice* cp. Is. xxxvii. 23; Nah. ii. 13.

the enemy and the avenger] Cp. viii. 2. The Heb. word for *avenger* suggests the idea of one who is taking a *selfish* vengeance, usurping, in his own interests, a function which belongs to God alone (Deut. xxxii. 35).

17—22. The calamity is unmerited. No unfaithfulness to God's covenant has called for punishment. Nay it is for His sake that His people are suffering.

17. *All this* &c.] Cp. Judg. vi. 13.

yet have we not &c.] Although we have not forgotten Thee, as our fathers did so often. Cp. lxxviii. 7, 11; cvi. 13, 21; Judg. iii. 7; Hos. ii. 13; iv. 6; viii. 14; xiii. 6; Jer. ii. 32.

neither &c.] **Neither have we been false to thy covenant.** Cp. lxxxix. 33; "Neither will I be false to my faithfulness." God's covenant with Abraham to be a God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. xvii. 7) was confirmed to the nation at Sinai (Ex. xix. 5; xxiv. 7, 8). Its sacrament was circumcision (Gen. xvii. 2 ff): its outward symbol was the Ark of the Covenant (Num. x. 33): and its fundamental charter was the Ten Words inscribed on the Tables of the Covenant (Deut. ix. 9).

19. *Though* &c.] Comp. the vigorous paraphrase of P.B.V.; *No, not when thou hast smitten us* &c. But it is better to render

That thou shouldest have crushed us into a haunt of jackals.

The Psalmist's argument is that there has been no national apostasy for which their present disasters would be a just punishment. *A haunt of jackals* is a proverbial expression for a scene of ruin and desolation, a waste, howling wilderness, tenanted only by wild beasts (Is. xiii. 22; xxxiv. 13; Jer. ix. 11; x. 22). Some commentators (on the hypothesis of the Maccabaean date) see a reference to the butchery of the Jews who

And covered us with the shadow of death.
If we have forgotten the name of our God, 20
Or stretched out our hands to a strange god;
Shall not God search this out? 21
For he knoweth the secrets of the heart.
Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; 22
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter.
Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? 23

had fled into the wilderness to escape from the persecution of Antiochus (1 Macc. ii. 27—38). But more probably the phrase is a condensed expression, meaning 'crushed us and reduced our country to a desert.' There is some doubt however about the reading. The Sept. has, 'humbled us in a place *of affliction*.'

the shadow of death] The word *tsalmāveth* is rendered thus in the Ancient Versions, and the present vocalisation assumes that this is the meaning. But compounds are rare in Hebrew except in proper names, and there are good grounds for supposing that the word is derived from a different root and should be read *tsalmūth*, and rendered *deep gloom*. It is however not improbable that the pronunciation of the word was altered at an early date in accordance with a popular etymology.

20. *stretched out*] R.V., **spread forth**: the gesture of prayer being not, as with us, *folded* hands, but the hands extended with open palms: the Lat. 'manibus passis.' Cp. cxliii. 6; 1 Kings viii. 22, 38, 54; Isa. i. 15.

21. It would be vain to attempt to conceal any faithlessness from the Searcher of hearts. Cp. Job's protestations of innocence, ch. xxxi. 4 ff.; and Ps. cxxxix. 1, 23; Jer. xvii. 10.

22. *Yea, for thy sake*] Or, **Nay, but for thy sake.** Not only have we not been unfaithful to Thee, but we are actually suffering as martyrs for Thy sake. Such a protest was no doubt particularly true in the persecution of Antiochus, but not in that period only. Cp. the complaints of lxix. 7; Jer. xv. 15.

This verse is quoted by St Paul in Rom. viii. 36, to encourage his converts in view of the possibility that they might have to face even death for Christ's sake. If the saints of old time had to suffer persecution even to the death, they need not be surprised if a like fate should befall them. And the quotation is doubtless intended (as so often) to carry with it the thought of its context, and to remind them of the steadfastness of the Old Testament saints under the sharpest trial of their faith.

23—26. An urgent appeal for immediate help.

23. *Awake...arise*] **Bestir thyself...awake.** Cp. vii. 6, and many similar invocations. But nowhere else do we find so bold an expostulation as *why sleepest thou?* The nearest parallel is in lxxviii. 65. The Psalmists do not shrink from using human language in reference to

Arise, cast *us* not off for ever.
24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face,
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression?
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust:
Our belly cleaveth unto the earth.
26 Arise for our help,
And redeem us for thy mercy's sake.

God, though they well knew that the Watchman of Israel was one who neither slumbered nor slept (cxxi. 3, 4).

It is recorded in the Talmud that in the time of the high-priest John Hyrcanus (B.C. 135—107) certain Levites, called 'Awakeners,' daily ascended the pulpit in the Temple and cried, "Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord"? He put a stop to the practice, saying, "Does Deity sleep? Has not the Scripture said, 'Behold he that keepeth Israel neither slumbereth nor sleepeth?'"

cast us *not off for ever*] Cp. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7; Lam. iii. 31.

24. *hidest thou thy face*] In anger or indifference, instead of shewing the light of Thy countenance in gracious help to Thy people (*v.* 3; lxxx. 3).

our affliction and our oppression] Cp. Deut. xxvi. 7; Ex. iii. 7, 9; 2 Kings xiii. 4; xiv. 26. The latter word occurs elsewhere in the Psalter only in xlii. 9, xliii. 2.

25. We lie utterly prostrate, crushed and helpless. Cp. cxix. 25.

26. *Arise*] R.V., **Rise up.** Cp. iii. 7; Num. x. 35.

for thy mercy's sake] R.V., **for thy lovingkindness' sake.** Jehovah has revealed Himself to be "a God...plenteous in *lovingkindness* and truth, who keeps *lovingkindness* for thousands" (Ex. xxxiv. 7, 8), and the Psalmist intreats Him to be true to this central attribute of His character. Cp. vi. 4; Mic. vii. 18, 20. On the reading *mercies'*, found in many editions, see Scrivener, *Auth. Ed. of the English Bible*, p. 196.

PSALM XLV.

A nuptial ode, celebrating the marriage of a king with a king's daughter. After a brief prelude (1) the Psalmist addresses the king, praising the personal beauty which marks him out as a ruler of men, and bidding him use his strength in the cause of truth and right. Noble qualities of heart and mind fit him for his lofty calling, on which the seal of divine approval has been newly set by the blessing of this supreme happiness, the crowning glory of his state and splendour (2—9). Then turning to the bride he bids her cheerfully accept her new position, and indicates its dignity by pointing to the gifts which allied nations bring in her honour. In magnificent bridal array she is conducted to the royal palace with jubilant rejoicings; and the Psalm concludes with the anticipation of a numerous posterity and undying and worldwide renown for so famous a monarch (10—17).

There is no clearly marked strophical arrangement. The poet passes from thought to thought as his enthusiasm kindles with the grandeur of his theme.

That the Psalm refers to some actual occasion cannot be doubted. Some commentators indeed deny that it has an historical basis, and regard it as wholly prophetic or ideal. The language, they say, far transcends any language that could be used of the best of earthly kings; and from the earliest times, alike in the Jewish and in the Christian Church, it has been understood to refer directly to the Messiah.

A careful study of the Psalm shews that this view is untenable. (1) There is no indication that the Psalmist intends to describe a future personage. (2) The language of the Ps. does not really go beyond what might have been said by a poet of an actual king, viewed in the light of the promises made to the house of David. (3) The Ps. contains realistic details of the circumstances of an Oriental court, which would hardly have been introduced, if it had been originally written as a sacred poem with a mystic meaning.

The view that the Ps. is exclusively Messianic rests in great measure upon an imperfect apprehension of the typical character of the Davidic kingship. The Davidic king was the representative of Jehovah, Who was the true King of Israel, and the poet-seer can boldly greet the reigning monarch in the light of the great prophecies to which he was the heir. Bidding him rise to the height of his calling by the exercise of a just rule which should be a true reflection of the divine government, he can claim for him the fulfilment of the promise of an eternal dominion. It is of the essence of poetry to idealise, and sacred poetry is no exception to the rule. It could disregard the limitations and imperfections of experience, and portray the king in the light of the true and perfect conception of his office, not simply as what he was, but as what he should be. See *Introd.* pp. lviii ff.; introd. and notes to Ps. ii; and comp. Riehm's *Messianic Prophecy* (Engl. Tr., ed. 2), pp. 102 ff.

Who then was the king, and what was the occasion referred to? If the lofty language of the Ps. is clearly based upon the Messianic promises and only explicable in connexion with them, some king of the house of David must be its theme. This consideration excludes kings of the Northern Kingdom, such as Ahab, who has been suggested because he possessed an ivory palace (cp. *v.* 8 with 1 Kings xxii. 39) and married a foreign princess (1 Kings xvi. 31); or Jeroboam II, the luxury and splendour of whose reign might seem to correspond to the description in the poem. Still more decisively does it exclude foreign kings, such as some unknown Persian monarch, or Ptolemy Philadelphus, or the Syrian king Alexander (1 Macc. x. 57, 58).

If then the Ps. must refer to some king of Judah, the choice appears to lie between Jehoram and Solomon. (1) Delitzsch finds a suitable occasion in the marriage of Jehoram with Athaliah. Jehoram was the son of the pious Jehoshaphat, whose reign revived the glories of the Solomonic age. Though not actually king when he married Athaliah, he had been raised to the position of co-regent with his father (2 Kings viii. 16). The exhortation to the bride to forget her home, and the

mention of Tyre, are supposed to be allusions to the Sidonian origin of Athaliah's mother, Jezebel.

It is however difficult to believe that an inspired poet could have regarded an alliance with the idolatrous house of Ahab with satisfaction, or that in view of the subsequent history such an ode would have been preserved in a collection of temple-hymns. Moreover this bride appears to be a foreign princess, not an Israelite. It remains to adopt the old view that the Psalm celebrates the marriage of Solomon with the daughter of the king of Egypt (1 Kings iii. 1). Such an alliance must have been an event of the highest importance. Solomon's court was a scene of splendour and luxury like that which is described in the Ps. The kingdom was at the zenith of its glory. The promises to David were recent: the hopes which they held out had not yet been dimmed by failure and disappointment. Then as at no other later time it was easy for a poet to idealise the kingship and the kingdom, and to use the language of lofty hope and confident anticipation. Solomon's close alliance with Hiram gives a natural explanation of the mention of Tyre (*v.* 12) as the representative of allied nations. A recent theory regards the Ps. as a 'dramatic lyric,' written after the Return from the exile at a time when the traditional glories of Solomon's reign attracted the attention and exercised the imagination of poets. The theory is improbable, but it recognises the fact that the Ps. may most appropriately be referred to Solomon. The only objections which deserve consideration are that the king is described as a martial hero, whereas Solomon was a man of peace: and that Solomon had no line of royal ancestors such as is supposed to be implied in *v.* 16. (1) To the first of these objections it may be answered that although this king is described as a conquering hero, more stress is laid upon the justice of his rule than upon his warlike exploits. Moreover Solomon was not deficient in military spirit, and though his reign was on the whole peaceful, it was by no means entirely so. He made great military preparations (1 Kings iv. 26; ix. 15 ff.; xi. 27; 2 Chr. viii. 5 ff.), and it is recorded that he conquered Hamath-zobah (2 Chr. viii. 3). It was scarcely possible for a poet to dissociate the idea of a king from the idea of a victorious warrior. (2) As regards the second objection, *v.* 16 does not necessarily imply a long line of royal ancestors. It may be understood as implying the reverse, and expressing the hope that a noble posterity might arise to compensate for the absence of the long ancestry upon which so many oriental monarchs prided themselves.

Whatever may have been the original occasion of the Ps., its Messianic significance has been almost universally recognised. "The marriage-song of the Jewish monarch laid open thoughts which could only be realised in the relation of the Divine King to His Church." The Targum paraphrases *v.* 2; "Thy beauty, O King Messiah, exceeds that of the children of men; a spirit of prophecy is bestowed upon thy lips:" and *v.* 10, "Hear, O congregation of Israel, the law of his mouth, and consider his wondrous works." The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes *vv.* 6, 7 as a description of the moral and eternal sovereignty of Christ (Hebr. i. 8, 9). If the king was typical of Christ, the marriage of the king might symbolise the bridal of Christ and the

Church; and this interpretation was facilitated by the common use of the figure of marriage in the O.T. to describe the relation of Jehovah to His people. The natural relationship is consecrated as the sacrament of the mystical relationship; and the mystical relationship is rendered more comprehensible to the human mind by the sanction of the analogy. Comp. Eph. v. 23 ff.; Apoc. xix. 7 ff.; xxi. 2; xxii. 17.

It may seem strange that an ode thus secular in its origin should find a place in the Canon. But the inclusion of such poems as this and the Song of Songs, with which this Psalm has much in common, helps to place the ordinary relations of human life in a truer light as part of the divine order of the world. And further they are ennobled and consecrated by being thus made the vehicle for lofty thoughts and the type of spiritual mysteries (Eph. v. 23 ff.).

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, for the sons of Korah, Maschil, A Song of loves.

My heart is inditing a good matter: 45
I speak of the things which I have made touching *the* king:
My tongue *is* the pen of a ready writer.

The title may be rendered as in R.V., **For the chief Musician; set to Shoshannim; (a Psalm) of the sons of Korah. Maschil, a Song of loves.** *Shoshannim*, that is, *lilies*, denotes not the theme of the Ps., in reference to the beauty and purity of the bride, nor a lily-shaped instrument by which it was to be accompanied, but the melody to which it was to be sung—some well-known song beginning with the word *Shoshannim*. See *Introd.* p. xxiii f., and cp. the titles of lxix, lx, lxxx. The word for *loves*, or *love*, is from the same root as that which forms part of Solomon's original name *Jedidiah = Beloved of Jah* (2 Sam. xii. 25). It is always used of high and noble affection, especially of Jehovah's love for His people (lx. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 12; Is. v. 1).

1. Introduction and dedication.

My heart &c.] Better, **My heart bubbleth over with goodly words.** The nobility of his subject inspires him with an impulse which will not be restrained.

I speak of the things &c.] Better, **I speak the things which I have made** (i.e. composed, cp. Old Eng. *maker* = poet) **touching a king.** The absence of the article (*a king*) lays stress upon the dignity rather than upon the personality of the subject of the Ps.; one who is a king and of no lower rank. The punctuation of the Massoretic Text points to a slightly different rendering: *I am about to speak; my work is for* (or, *touching*) *a king.*

the pen of a ready writer] Prompt to express and record the thoughts with which the mind is overflowing. The words rendered *ready writer* are applied to Ezra (vii. 6) the 'ready scribe,' but clearly they do not here bear this technical sense of 'a learned student of the law,' but the literal sense of 'a skilful and rapid penman.'

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men:
Grace is poured into thy lips:
Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.
3 Gird thy sword upon *thy* thigh, O *most* mighty,
With thy glory and thy majesty.
4 And *in* thy majesty ride prosperously

2—9. The royal bridegroom: his personal beauty, the justice of his government, the success of his arms, the glory of his kingdom, the magnificence of his court. He is one upon whom the Divine blessing has rested in fullest measure.

2. *Thou art fairer* &c.] Personal beauty was always regarded as a qualification for a ruler, partly on account of its intrinsic attractiveness, partly as the index of a noble nature. Cp. 1 Sam. ix. 2; x. 23; xvi. 12; and the descriptions of the classical heroes in Homer and Vergil; e.g. Aeneas (*Aen.* i. 589), "os humerosque deo similis."

grace is poured into thy lips] Or, *upon thy lips*. The gracious smile upon his lips gives promise of the gracious words which proceed from them. Cp. Prov. xxii. 11, "He that hath gracious lips, the king shall be his friend"; Eccl. x. 12; Lk. iv. 22.

therefore] This is usually explained to mean, 'Hence it may be seen that God hath blessed thee; it is the logical inference from this endowment of beauty.' But must not *therefore* be understood as in *v.* 7? Physical qualifications correspond to moral qualifications. They are in themselves a Divine gift; but they are further regarded as a ground of the special blessings which have been showered upon the king. The P. B. V. *because* is ungrammatical.

for ever] The perpetuity of the covenant with David and his seed is constantly emphasised. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 25, 29; Ps. xviii. 50; lxxxix. 2 ff.

3. Instead of praising the king's strength and courage in the abstract, the Psalmist bids him use them in the cause of truth and right.

O most *mighty*] **O mighty hero.**

with *thy glory and thy majesty*] It is better to repeat the verb: **(gird on) thy honour and thy majesty.** Honour and majesty are Divine attributes, reflected in the person of the victorious King who is Jehovah's representative. Cp. xcvi. 6; civ. 1; cxlv. 5; with xxi. 5.

4. *And* in *thy majesty*] The single word of the original is an exact repetition of the last word of *v.* 3. Such repetitions are a common poetical figure; but the construction is harsh, the prep. *in* not being expressed; the word is omitted by the Syr. (probably) and Jer. (ed. Lagarde); and may be due to an early error of transcription. The consonants are recognised by the LXX, but differently vocalised and rendered, *and bend* [thy bow]. This rendering however involves a doubtful ellipse, and the mention of the bow is hardly in place here.

ride prosperously] Ride on victoriously, on warhorse or in chariot, forcing a way irresistibly through the ranks of the enemy.

Because of truth and meekness *and* righteousness;
And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible *things*.
Thine arrows *are* sharp
In the heart of the king's enemies;
Whereby the people fall under thee.
Thy throne, O God, *is* for ever and ever:

because of truth] Better, **in the cause of truth**: in defence and furtherance of virtues which are trampled under foot in evil times and under bad rulers. (Is. lix. 14, 15). Truth and righteousness are the constant attributes of the true king: meekness is the characteristic of the true people of God; and it is the king's work to see that the meek have justice done them. Cp. Is. xi. 1—5; xxix. 19; Zeph. ii. 3; Ps. xxxvii. 11; lxxvi. 9; &c.

shall teach thee] Or, *and let thy right hand teach thee terrible things*, an epithet applied to the marvellous works of God for His people, inspiring them with a holy awe, and their foes with a panic terror (Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Is. lxiv. 3; Ps. lxv. 5; cvi. 22; cxlv. 6). By a bold figure the king's *right hand*, i.e. his strength and courage, is said to teach or shew him terrible things, as his success in battle reveals the divine energy with which he has been endowed.

5. As the text stands it must be rendered;

Thine arrows are sharp;
Peoples fall under thee:
(They are) in the heart of the king's enemies.

The poet depicts the battle with rapid vigorous strokes of his pen. The king's arrows are sharpened (Is. v. 28), ready for fatal effect; his enemies fall at their discharge; he rides on over their prostrate corpses; each shaft has found its mark in the heart of a foe. But the construction is abrupt, and possibly there is some error in the text.

6. *Thy throne, O God*, is *for ever and ever*] (1) This appears to be the sense given by all the Ancient Versions, for though it has been argued that ὁ θεὸς in the LXX is not the vocative (*Thy throne O God*) but the predicate (*Thy throne is God*), the words do not appear to have been so understood by any of the ancient commentators, and the construction is certainly not an obvious one. But this rendering involves serious difficulties, whether it is taken as an address to the king or to God. (*a*) Can the king who is the subject of the Ps. be addressed as *Elohim*, 'God'? The older expositors, who regarded the Psalm as directly Messianic, of course felt no difficulty, and saw in the words a recognition of the Deity of Christ. But the tone and contents of the Psalm make it clear that it is addressed to some actual king. Could such a king be so addressed? It is argued that judges were called *gods* (Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28(?); 1 Sam. ii. 25); that the theocratic king as the representative of God was said to sit "on the throne of Jehovah" (1 Chr. xxviii. 5; xxix. 23); that a prophet can predict that the house of David should be *as God* (Zech. xii. 8); that *Elohim* is applied to men in the sense of divine or supernatural (Ex. vii. 1; 1 Sam. xxviii. 13); that Isaiah speaks of the Messianic king

as *El gibbōr*, 'mighty God'; and that the words of the next verse (where doubtless *Jehovah thy God* originally stood) preclude the possibility of misunderstanding. But it is doubtful whether judges are actually called *gods* (see R.V. of the passage quoted): certainly they are only so called as the mouthpieces of God, who is regarded as the fountain of judgement: and after all that has been urged in favour of this interpretation it seems hardly possible to suppose that the king is directly addressed as *Elohim*.

(*b*) The Targum regards the words as addressed to Jehovah, 'The throne of Thy majesty, O Jehovah, abideth for ever and ever.' Jehovah's throne may mean His heavenly throne (cxlv. 13; Lam. v. 19), or the throne which He has established on earth as its counterpart and representative. But this interpretation seems to be excluded by the context. The king is addressed in the preceding and following verses, and it seems hardly possible to suppose that in this verse alone Jehovah is abruptly addressed.

(2) In view of these difficulties it is necessary to consider whether the words are correctly translated. Various other renderings have been proposed, taking *Elohim* as the subject or predicate of the clause instead of as a vocative. (*a*) *God is thy throne:* i.e. thy kingdom is founded upon God. In support of this are quoted such phrases as "Jehovah is my refuge and my fortress" (xci. 2), or, "The eternal God is thy dwelling-place" (Deut. xxxiii. 27). But the expression, to say the least, would be a strange one. (*b*) *Thy throne is God*, i.e. divine. But though Hebrew uses substantives as predicates in a way which our idiom does not allow, this particular instance seems scarcely admissible. (*c*) *Thy throne* [is the throne of] *God* (R.V. marg.). It is a disputed point whether this rendering is grammatically legitimate; but good authorities decide in the affirmative. It gives an excellent sense, and if the text is to be retained is the most satisfactory explanation of it. The theocratic king occupied the earthly throne of Jehovah as His representative (1 Chr. xxviii. 5; xxix. 23), ruling by His power (1 Kings iii. 28), and in His Name; and the justice of this king's government (6*b*, 7) stamps him as a worthy representative of Jehovah.

(3) Various emendations have been suggested, for the most part introducing a verb to give the sense, *God hath established thy throne.* The most ingenious is that of Bruston, who supposes that the Elohistic editor misread YHVH, *Jehovah*, for YHYH, *shall be*, and according to his usual custom substituted *Elohim*. *Thy throne shall be for ever and ever* would be an echo of the promise in 2 Sam. vii. 16 *b*.

Whatever may be the precise rendering, there can be little doubt that the words contain a reference to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, which was fulfilled in Christ. See 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16; Ps. lxxxix; cp. xxi. 4; lxii. 5.

vv. 6, 7 are quoted in Heb. i. 8, 9. "It is commonly supposed that the force of the quotation lies in the Divine title (ὁ θεός) which, as it is held, is applied to the Son. It seems however from the whole form of the argument to lie rather in the description which is given of the Son's office and endowment. The angels are subject to constant change, He has a dominion for ever and ever; they work through material powers,

The sceptre of thy kingdom *is* a right sceptre.
Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: 7
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.
All thy garments *smell of* myrrh, and aloes, *and* cassia, 8

He—the Incarnate Son—fulfils a moral sovereignty and is crowned with unique joy. Nor could the reader forget the later teaching of the Psalm on the Royal Bride and the Royal Race. In whatever way then *ὁ θεός* be taken, the quotation establishes the conclusion which the writer wishes to draw as to the essential difference of the Son and the angels." Bp. Westcott *in loc.*

the sceptre &c.] R.V. rightly, **A sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom.** The sceptre is the symbol of royal authority; and the authority of the true king, like that of Jehovah, is exercised in righteousness and equity. Cp. lxvii. 4; lxxxix. 14 with Is. ix. 7; xi. 4 ff; Ps. lxxii. 2 ff, 12 ff, and numerous passages in which righteousness is named as a fundamental attribute of God and an indispensable characteristic of His true representative on earth.

7. *Thou lovest* &c.] Or, as R.V., **Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness.** "I have loved justice and hated iniquity, and therefore I die in exile" were the last memorable words of Gregory VII. Milman, *Hist. of Lat. Christianity*, iv. 138.

therefore] The willing conformity of the king to the will of God is rewarded with special tokens of His favour.

God, thy God] The rendering, *O God, thy God* is unquestionably wrong. *God, thy God* in the Elohistic Psalms is the equivalent of *Jehovah thy God* elsewhere. Cp. xliii. 4; l. 7.

hath anointed thee &c.] The reference is not to anointing as the symbol of consecration to the office of king, but to the use of oil on occasions of festivity (xxiii. 5; civ. 15). Thus 'the oil of gladness' is contrasted with mourning (Is. lxi. 3: cp. 2 Sam. xii. 20; xiv. 2). The rejoicings of the marriage festival are meant. Cp. Cant. iii. 11.

thy fellows] Other kings, to none of whom has equal happiness been granted. Cp. lxxxix. 27 *b*.

8. The bridegroom appears, arrayed for the marriage, his garments saturated with costly perfumes, brought from distant lands. *Myrrh* was a product of Arabia: *aloes* here denotes the perfumed wood of an Indian tree: *cassia* (a different word from that so translated in Ex. xxx. 24; Ezek. xxvii. 19, and found here only) was either a species of cinnamon, or the *koost* of India, Indian orris or *costus*. Myrrh and aloes are mentioned together in Cant. iv. 14 among chief spices.

Prof. Earle notes that "these English spice-names are all identical with the words in the Hebrew; for with these oriental spices their oriental names travelled westward, and they became through Greek and Latin the common property of the European languages." *Psalter of* 1539, p. 285.

Out of the ivory palaces, *where*by they have made thee glad.
9 Kings' daughters *were* among thy honourable *women:*
Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.
10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear;
Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

out of the ivory palaces, where*by they have made thee glad*] An impossible rendering. Translate with R.V., **out of ivory palaces stringed instruments have made thee glad**. Music greets the bridegroom as he enters the palace. Palaces ornamented with ivory, probably inlaid in panels, are mentioned in 1 Kings xxii. 39; Am. iii. 15. Cp. 1 Kings x. 18, 22; Cant. v. 14; vii. 4; Am. vi. 4; Ezek. xxvii. 6, 15. Homer (*Od.* IV. 72) speaks of

Echoing halls
Of gold, electron, silver, ivory,

in the palace of Menelaus. Vergil (*Aen.* x. 135 ff.) and Horace (*Odes* II. 18. 2) mention the use of ivory for inlaying.

9. Kings' daughters are among thy honourable women: At thy right hand doth stand the queen in gold of Ophir (R.V.).

An Oriental monarch prided himself on the number and nobility of the wives in his harem, and some at least of the Jewish monarchs were no exception to the rule (1 Kings xi. 3; Cant. vi. 8). It may seem strange that such a degradation of the true ideal of marriage should find place in a Psalm which opens up such lofty thoughts and hopes. But the Psalm reflects the actual facts and customs of the age: it is not intended to depict a perfect state of things. One of the wives takes precedence of the rest and occupies the place of honour (1 Kings ii. 19) at the king's right hand. It is implied that this place is reserved for the new bride whom the poet now turns to address. The verse is a general description of the king's state, for the bride has not yet been brought in (*v.* 14); or is the poet anticipating? Gold of Ophir was the choicest gold (1 Kings ix. 28; x. 11; Job xxii. 24; xxviii. 16), but where Ophir was is not known. Most probably it was in S. Arabia or India.

10—12. The poet addresses the bride, counselling her to forget her old home and surrender herself with complete devotion to her husband, and describing the honours which await her.

10. *Hearken, O daughter*] The Psalmist adopts the tone of an authoritative teacher and uses language resembling that of the Wise Man to his disciples in the opening chapter of Proverbs (i. 8, and frequently). The exhortation seems strange until it is remembered that the marriage was probably a matter of state policy, and that the bride would not even have seen her future husband.

forget &c.] Cast no lingering looks of regret behind, but adapt thyself to the new home and new conditions. Perhaps, as the Targ. suggests, there may be a special reference to religious beliefs and customs. It has been thought that Pharaoh's daughter embraced

So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: 11
For he *is* thy Lord; and worship thou him.
And the daughter of Tyre *shall be there* with a gift; 12
Even the rich among the people shall intreat thy favour.
The king's daughter *is* all glorious within: 13
Her clothing *is* of wrought gold.
She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needle- 14
work:

Judaism, as Egyptian deities are not mentioned among those for which Solomon made high places. See Lumby on 1 Kings iii. 1.

11. *So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty*] Omit *greatly*.

worship thou him] Better, **do him homage**: not necessarily in the literal sense of prostrating herself before him (1 Sam. xxv. 41; 1 Kings i. 16, 31), but by shewing him befitting respect and submission. This exhortation, and the title *lord* for husband (cp. Gen. xviii. 12) reflect the subordinate position of women in ancient times and Oriental countries. Yet see also 1 Pet. iii. 5, 6. The rendering of P.B.V., *for he is thy Lord God*, follows the Vulg. But *God* is not in the LXX, and was no doubt a gloss in accordance with the Messianic interpretation.

12. The words *shall be there* are not in the Heb., and it has been proposed to render, *And, O daughter of Tyre, with a gift shall the rich of the people intreat thy favour*, making the bride a Tyrian princess. But apart from other objections, *the daughter of Tyre* should mean, according to the analogy of the similar phrases, *daughter of Zion*, *daughter of Babylon*, not an individual Tyrian woman, but the city and people of Tyre personified as a woman: and the A.V. no doubt gives the sense correctly, though some verb has probably been lost. The express mention of the wealthy merchant city of Tyre as the representative of the neighbouring nations which would send their greetings to the new queen is most naturally accounted for if the Psalm refers to Solomon, who was in close alliance with Tyre.

even *the rich* &c.] Render, **Yea, the richest of people**: i.e. as the LXX paraphrases, *the people of the earth*; or perhaps, *of the land*: wealthy nobles of the country as well as foreigners.

13—15. Description of the bride adorned for her husband.

13. The king's daughter within (the palace) is all glorious: Her clothing is inwrought with gold. (R.V.)

The bride is described in all the splendour of her bridal attire. **Within** the palace, or **in the inner part** of the palace, may refer to her old home, the Psalmist by poetical licence ignoring intervals of time and place; but, more probably, to the house in Jerusalem to which she had been brought, and from which she is now to be conducted in state to the king's palace (*vv.* 14, 15).

14. In raiment of embroidery shall she be conducted to the king, in solemn and stately procession, accompanied by a train of attendants such as befits a king's daughter. Cp. Esth. ii. 9. For mention of

The virgins her companions that follow her *shall be* brought
unto thee.
15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought:
They shall enter into the king's palace.
16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children,
Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.
17 I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations:
Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

embroidery cp. Ex. xxviii. 39; Judg. v. 30; &c. Other but less probable renderings are, *on tapestry* or *carpets of divers colours*, or, *into tapestry-curtained chambers*.

15. *shall they be brought*] **Shall they be conducted**, as in *v.* 14. The procession which conducted the bride to her new home was an important part of the marriage ceremony, and was always accompanied with songs and music and dancing and every mark of rejoicing. See 1 Macc. ix. 37 ff. "The children of Jambrin made a great marriage, and were bringing the bride from Nadabath with a great escort, inasmuch as she was the daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan....And there was much ado, and a great train of baggage; and the bridegroom came forth with his friends and his brethren to meet them, with drums and instruments of music and many weapons."

16, 17. Concluding wishes and anticipations addressed to the king.

16. *Instead of thy fathers* &c.] The wish does not, as is sometimes said, imply a long line of royal ancestors, and therefore exclude the reference of the Psalm to Solomon, but rather the reverse. If he cannot boast of a long ancestry, may he at least be famous for a numerous and distinguished posterity.

whom thou mayest &c.] Better, **whom thou shalt make princes in all the earth** (R.V.). We might render **in all the land**, and compare Solomon's governors (1 Kings iv. 7 ff.), and the 'princes of the provinces' in the Northern Kingdom (1 Kings xx. 14, 15), and Rehoboam's settlement of his sons in different fortified cities (2 Chron. xi. 23). But the reference to subject and allied peoples (*vv.* 5, 17) makes it probable that *in all the earth* is right. Cp. ii. 8; lxxii. 8 ff.

17. The poet's song will perpetuate the memory of the king; and that not in Israel only, but among other peoples (lxxii. 17).

therefore shall the people praise thee] **Therefore shall the peoples praise thee**, or (R.V.) **give thee thanks**: a word commonly applied to God (xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 4, 5; and often), rarely to men (Gen. xlix. 8; Ps. xlix. 18). Solomon's name is remembered while the names of monarchs far more powerful from a worldly point of view have been forgotten, because God had made him His representative and the head of His visible kingdom upon earth, the type of His perfect representative who should come to establish His universal kingdom among men.

PSALM XLVI.

Psalms xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, are closely connected. They form a trilogy of praise, in which some signal deliverance of Jerusalem from foreign enemies is celebrated. In Ps. xlvi the leading idea is the Presence of Jehovah in the midst of His city and people as the ground of their confidence: in Ps. xlvii it is the universal Sovereignty of Jehovah as the King of all the earth, of which the recent defeat of Zion's enemies is an illustration: in Ps. xlviii it is the Safety of Zion, the result and the proof of God's presence in her midst.

These Psalms cannot be merely general expressions of confidence in Jehovah as the protector of Zion. They plainly owe their origin to some definite historical event. The Psalmist writes as the representative of those who have recently passed through some terrible crisis of anxiety, who have seen with their own eyes a signal manifestation of God's power on behalf of His people, comparable to His mighty works of old time, and who have recognised in the course of events the proof not only of Jehovah's love for His own people but of His universal sovereignty.

The miraculous deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib in the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 701) may be assigned as the occasion of these Psalms, with a probability which approaches certainty.

Hezekiah had asserted his independence of Assyria, and Sennacherib had come to chastise his rebellious vassal. The exact course of events is obscure, but it appears that Sennacherib after ravaging Judah compelled Hezekiah to make a humble submission and pay a heavy indemnity, without however requiring the surrender of Jerusalem (2 Kings xviii. 13—16). But reflection quickly convinced him that it would be imprudent to leave behind him such a strong fortress as Jerusalem in the hands of a vassal of such doubtful loyalty as Hezekiah, while he marched on into Egypt, and therefore while he was besieging Lachish with the main body of his army, he sent a force under the command of his chief officers, the Tartan and the Rabsaris and the Rabshakeh, to demand the surrender of Jerusalem. It was an anxious moment. A refusal seemed certain to ensure condign chastisement when Sennacherib returned victorious from his Egyptian campaign. Jerusalem would share the fate which had befallen Samaria twenty-one years before. But relying upon Jehovah's promise to defend His city, communicated through the prophet Isaiah, Hezekiah refused the demand, and Sennacherib's envoys returned to their master, who was now besieging Libnah. Gladly no doubt he would have inflicted a summary vengeance on his defiant vassal. But Tirhakah's army was already on the march, and all that Sennacherib could do was to threaten. His letter to Hezekiah was a contemptuous denial of Jehovah's power to defend Jerusalem. Hezekiah took it to the Temple, and "spread it before Jehovah," appealing to Him to confute these blasphemies, and vindicate His claim to be the living God. Then it was that Isaiah uttered that sublime prophecy in which he declared that Sennacherib's

pride was doomed to be humbled, and that Jerusalem would be preserved inviolate.

And so it came to pass. A sudden and mysterious visitation destroyed Sennacherib's army. Unable to face Tirhakah, he returned to Assyria, leaving Jerusalem unharmed.

A deliverance so marvellous, so strikingly verifying Isaiah's prophecy, and so visibly demonstrating the will and power of Jehovah to defend His people, could not fail to make a deep impression, and must have evoked the most heartfelt expressions of thanksgiving and praise (cp. Is. xxx. 29). And when we mark the numerous coincidences of thought and language between these Psalms and the prophecies of Isaiah, we can scarcely doubt that some of the noblest of these thanksgivings have been preserved to us in these Psalms.

Details will be found in the notes: here it may be sufficient to call attention to some of the broader features of resemblance. The leading thought of Ps. xlvi, expressed in the refrain (*vv.* 7, 11), is the echo of Isaiah's great watchword Immanuel (Is. vii. 14; viii. 8, 10; cp. Mic. iii. 11). The truth of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah, the assurance that God 'our King' is the King of all the earth, which is the prominent idea of Ps. xlvii (cp. xlviii. 2), is implicitly contained, if not so explicitly expressed, in the teaching of Isaiah (vi. 5; xxxvii. 22 ff.). The inviolability of Zion, the dwelling-place of Jehovah, which is the theme of Ps. xlviii, is a fundamental principle of Isaiah's message in the reign of Hezekiah (xxix. 3 ff.; xxxi. 5; &c.).

Proof is of course impossible, but these Psalms will gain vastly in vividness and reality if they are studied in close connexion with the prophecies of Isaiah, as the expression of the gratitude and the hopes which animated the noblest spirits in Jerusalem at that critical moment of the nation's history. If not written by Isaiah himself, as some commentators have thought, they must at least have been written by one of Isaiah's disciples who was deeply penetrated with the spirit and language of his master's prophecies.

Pss. lxxv, lxxvi in the Asaphite collection probably refer to the same event, and should be compared.

A brief mention of two rival theories is all that is necessary. (1) Delitzsch adopts the view that the occasion of these Psalms was the discomfiture of the confederate forces of the Moabites Ammonites and Edomites, who invaded Judah in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chr. xx). Jahaziel, an Asaphite Levite, foretold their defeat. The army marched out with Korahite singers at its head. The arms of the invaders were turned against one another, and in the neighbourhood of Tekoa their forces were annihilated. The victory was celebrated first in the valley of Beracah, and then by a triumphal thanksgiving procession to the Temple. A deep impression was produced upon surrounding nations by the report of the victory. This view however is improbable, for (*a*) upon that occasion Jerusalem was not directly threatened, and (*b*) it fails to account for the connexion of the Psalms with Isaiah's prophecies. That the prophet is copying the Psalmist is unlikely.

(2) Others have found an appropriate occasion in the attack of the confederate forces of Pekah and Rezin upon Judah in the reign of Ahaz,

mainly on the ground of resemblances to Isaiah's prophecies of that period. But inasmuch as Ahaz had refused to trust Jehovah and faithlessly appealed to Assyria for help, the retreat of the invaders can have been no occasion for thanksgivings like these Psalms, which ascribe Judah's deliverance wholly to the goodness of Jehovah.

Ps. xlvi consists of three equal stanzas, each followed by a *Selah*. The second and third end with a refrain (*vv.* 7, 11), which may perhaps have originally stood at the close of the first also. Comp. Pss. xlii, xliii. In the first stanza the primary truth that God is the refuge of His people is presented as the truest ground for fearless confidence (1—3): the second refers to the specific illustration of this truth exhibited in the recent deliverance of Zion (4—7): the third treats this manifestation of Jehovah's power as the earnest and pledge of His final supremacy over all the nations (8—11).

Luther's famous hymn, *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*, "the battle-song of the Reformation," is based upon this Psalm. See Winkworth's *Christian Singers of Germany*, p. 110.

To the chief Musician for the sons of Korah, A Song upon Alamoth.

God *is* our refuge and strength, 46
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, 2
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

The title should be rendered as in R.V., **For the Chief Musician; (a Psalm) of the sons of Korah; set to Alamoth. A song.** *Alāmōth* means *damsels* (lxviii. 25), and the phrase *set to Alāmōth*, which is applied in 1 Chr. xv. 20 to instruments, probably denotes that the music of the Ps. was intended for women's voices (cp. lxviii. 11, note). The Ancient Versions were entirely at fault as to the meaning. The LXX renders *ὑπὲρ τῶν κρυφίων*, 'concerning secret things,' Vulg. *pro occultis*: Symm. *ὑπὲρ τῶν αἰωνίων*, 'concerning eternal things': Aq. *ἐπὶ νεανιοτήτων*, and similarly Jer., *pro iuventutibus*, 'for youth.'

1—3. Secure under His protection God's people have nothing to fear, even though the solid earth were convulsed, and rent asunder.

1. The prayer of Is. xxxiii. 2, "Be thou their arm every morning, our salvation also in the time of trouble," has been answered. In the extremity of their distress, God has proved Himself the refuge and strength of His people. He has verified the prophecies of Isaiah, who bade them trust in Him alone, and denounced the popular policy of an alliance with Egypt as "a refuge of lies." Cp. Is. xxviii. 15, 17; xxx. 2.

a very present help in trouble] Lit., *a help in distresses hath he let himself be found exceedingly*. The words are not merely a general statement, but an appeal to recent experience. For 'let himself be found' cp. 2 Chr. xv. 2, 4, 15; Jer. xxix. 14.

2. Therefore will we not fear, though earth should change,
And the mountains be moved into the heart of the seas.

3 *Though* the waters thereof roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.

4 *There is* a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God,
The holy *place* of the tabernacles of the most High.

Cp. Horace's description of the dauntlessness of the just man (*Odes* III. 3. 7),

Si fractus illabatur orbis,
Impavidum ferient ruinae.

The words are to be understood literally (Is. liv. 10), and not metaphorically, as "a vivid sketch of utter confusion, dashed in with three or four bold strokes, an impossible case supposed in order to bring out the unshaken calm of those who have God for ark in such a deluge" (Maclaren). At the same time they suggest the thought of the upheaval and commotion of the nations, and (*v.* 3) the flood of invasion beating against mount Zion and threatening to overwhelm it. Cp. *v.* 6; Is. xvii. 12, 13.

3. As the text stands this verse must be treated, as in the A.V. and R.V., as a continuation of *v.* 2. But the symmetrical structure of the Ps., resembling that of Pss. xlii—xliii, makes it probable that the refrain (*vv.* 7, 11) has been lost. If it is restored, we may render:

Let the waters thereof rage and foam!
Let the mountains quake at the proud swelling thereof!
Jehovah of hosts is with us,
The God of Jacob is our high fortress.

Be all around us never so threatening, we are secure in the presence and protection of Jehovah. For the 'proud swelling' of the sea cp. lxxxix. 9.

4—7. The Presence of God the joy and security of His people.

4. In contrast to the tumultuous sea threatening to engulf the solid mountain, is the river, *the streams whereof* **make glad** *the city of God*. The gently flowing river, fertilising all the land over which it is distributed in channels and rivulets, is an emblem of Jehovah's Presence, blessing and gladdening His city. Abundant irrigation is indispensable in Palestine. Cp. i. 3; Is. xxx. 25. The figure reminds us of Is. viii. 6, where "the waters of Shiloah that go softly" are the emblem of the Divine government, and "the waters of the River great and many" are the emblem of the power of Assyria; and again of Is. xxxiii. 21, where Jehovah is compared to a mighty river encircling and protecting His city.

the city of God] Cp. xlviii. 1, 8; lxxxvii. 3; ci. 8; Is. lx. 14; Heb. xii. 22; Rev. iii. 12.

the holy place &c.] Better, **the holy dwelling place of the Most High**. Cp. xliii. 3, note. The title *Most High* is significant. By His deliverance of His own city He has proved Himself the supreme Ruler

God *is* in the midst of her; she shall not be moved:
God shall help her, *and that* right early.
The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved:
He uttered his voice, the earth melted.
The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

of the world, refuting the self-deifying pretensions of Sennacherib (Is. xxxvi. 20; xxxvii. 4, 10 ff., 23, 35; cp. xiv. 13, 14). Cp. Ps. vii. 17, and for the usage of this title see Appendix, Note ii.

5. *God* is *in the midst of her*] Cp. Is. xii. 6; and Mic. iii. 11, where we learn how this watchword was abused by those who saw in the Presence of God a pledge of protection but no call to holiness.

she shall not be moved] More stable than the solid mountains (*v.* 2): more secure than the kingdoms of the earth (*v.* 6).

and that *right early*] Better, **when the morn appeareth**, when the dawn of deliverance succeeds the night of distress (v. 3; xxx. 5): but not without a special reference to the morning when they rose to find Sennacherib's army destroyed (Is. xxxvii. 36), and a reminiscence of the Exodus, where the same phrase is used (Ex. xiv. 27).

6. *The heathen raged*] Or, **the nations roared**;—a word commonly used of the tumultuous noise of a multitude or an army (lxxxiii. 2; Is. xvii. 12). The same words (*roared...were moved*), which were used in *vv.* 2, 3 of convulsions of the earth, are applied to commotions among the nations; but the change of tense shews that while *vv.* 2, 3 are hypothetical, *v.* 6 refers to an actual experience.

he uttered his voice] God has but to speak with His voice of thunder, and earth melts in terror: its inhabitants with all their proud Titanic boastings are dissolved. Cp. Is. xxix. 6; xxx. 30 f; Ex. xv. 15; Am. ix. 5; Ps. lxxv. 3; lxxvi. 8. The rhythm of short abrupt clauses without a conjunction recalls that of Ex. xv. 9, 10.

7. The refrain corresponds to Isaiah's watchword *Immanuel*, 'God is with us' (Is. vii. 14; viii. 8, 10). The name *Jehovah* is retained (or has been restored) here even in the Elohistic collection in the familiar title *Jehovah of hosts*. This great title *Jehovah Tsebāōth* or 'LORD of hosts' was characteristic of the regal and prophetic period. Originally it may have designated Jehovah as "the God of the armies of Israel" (1 Sam. xvii. 45), Who went forth with His people's hosts to battle (xliv. 9; lx. 10). But as the phrase "host of heaven" was used for the celestial bodies (Gen. ii. 1), and celestial beings (1 Kings xxii. 19), the meaning of the title was extended to designate Jehovah as the ruler of the heavenly powers, the supreme Sovereign of the universe. Hence one of the renderings of it in the LXX is Κύριος παντοκράτωρ, *Lord Almighty*, or rather, *Lord All-Sovereign*. See add. note on 1 Sam., p. 235. The title is a favourite one with Isaiah, and its use here is significant. He whose command all the hosts of heaven obey is Israel's ally. Cp. 2 Kings vi. 16 ff.

the God of Jacob] A title suggesting the thought of Jehovah's provi-

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD,
What desolations he hath made in the earth.
9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth;
He breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder;
He burneth the chariot in the fire.
10 Be still, and know that I *am* God:
I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.
11 The LORD of hosts *is* with us;
The God of Jacob *is* our refuge. Selah.

dential care for the great ancestor of the nation, a thought upon which Hosea dwells (xii. 2 ff.).

our refuge] Or, *our high fortress:* the same word as that in ix. 9; xviii. 2; xlviii. 3; Is. xxxiii. 16. Cp. the use of the cognate verb in xx. 1, "The Name of the God of Jacob set thee up on high."

8—11. An exhortation to reflect upon this marvellous deliverance and learn its lesson.

8. *Come, behold*] The invitation is addressed to all (Is. xxxiii. 13), but especially to the nations, who are bidden (*v.* 10) to take warning from the sight. They are not merely to "see the works of Jehovah" (lxvi. 5), but to *behold* them; to gaze upon them with discerning insight.

the LORD] Some MSS. read *God*; but LXX, Targ., Jer., support the text. The name *Jehovah* may have been retained as significant in relation to foreign enemies.

what desolations &c.] Rather, **who hath set desolations**, or, **astonishments**. It is possible, as Lagarde thought, that the LXX represents another reading, *wonders* (Jer. xxxii. 20).

9. The destruction of the Assyrians is an earnest of that final abolition of war which Jehovah will one day bring about, destroying the weapons of war, or burning them in a vast pyre upon the battlefield, as Isaiah predicted (ix. 5, R.V.). Cp. Is. ii. 4 (=Mic. iv. 3); Zech. ix. 10.

the chariot] R.V. **the chariots.** The word however is nowhere used of war chariots, and must rather mean *baggage-wagons* (cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 20; xxvi. 7). Perhaps, as Baethgen proposes, the word should be vocalised *'agīlōth* instead of *'agālōth*, and rendered as in LXX and Targ., *shields*.

10. Jehovah speaks, admonishing the nations to desist from their vain endeavour to destroy His people, and bidding them recognise Him as the true God, who will manifest His absolute supremacy. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 10; Ex. xiv. 4, 17, 18; Ps. ii. 10.

11. The refrain with its triumphant chorus of faith and gratitude forms an appropriate conclusion.

PSALM XLVII.

This Psalm is an expansion of the thought of Ps. xlvi. 10. Zion's King is the true 'great King' (xlviii. 2), the King of all the earth. All nations are summoned to pay homage to the God who has proclaimed and proved His supremacy by His recent triumph over the heathen. The occasion of the Psalm was probably the same as that of Pss. xlvi and xlviii, though the allusions to the circumstances are less definite, and the resemblances to the prophecies of Isaiah are less marked than in those Psalms. But it celebrates a recent victory, after which God, who had 'come down' to fight for His people (Is. xxxi. 4), had 'ascended up' in triumph to heaven (*v.* 5). The discomfiture of Sennacherib was precisely such a triumph; a lesson, as Isaiah repeatedly implies, to the nations not less than to Judah, of Jehovah's supreme sovereignty.

The similarity of the Psalm to Pss. xciii, xcvi—xcix, has led many commentators to connect it with the Return from Exile. There seems however to be scarcely sufficient reason for separating it from the Psalms between which it stands, and with both of which it has links of connexion.

It is rightly regarded as a Messianic Psalm, inasmuch as it looks forward to the submission of all the nations of the world to Jehovah as their King; and it has naturally, on account of *v.* 5, been used from ancient times as a special Psalm for Ascension Day. Not that *v.* 5 is a prophecy of the Ascension; the context makes it plain that it cannot be so regarded. But the words originally spoken of Jehovah's return to His throne in heaven (as we speak) after His triumph over the deadly enemies of His people, may be legitimately applied to the return of Christ to heaven after His triumph over sin and death, to take His seat upon His throne of glory at the right hand of God.

It is the New Year's Day Psalm of the Synagogue, recited seven times previous to the blowing of the Trumpets, which marked that festival (Num. xxix. 1).

The Psalm consists of three stanzas:

i. An universal summons to praise Jehovah, the King of all the earth, who has chosen Israel to be His people (1—4).

ii. A repeated summons to sing His praises, in view of the recent manifestation of His sovereignty (5—7).

iii. The ultimate realisation of that sovereignty in the homage of the princes of the nations (8, 9).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

O clap *your* hands, all ye people; 47

1—4. A summons to all nations to acknowledge Jehovah as their King. He has proved His sovereignty by subjecting the nations to His own people and assigning to it the choicest land for its inheritance.

1. *all ye people*] Render **all ye peoples**, here and in *vv.* 3, 9*a*. It is the nations of the world who are addressed. They are summoned to salute Jehovah, as a new king was saluted on his accession, with clapping

Shout unto God with the voice of triumph.
2 For the LORD most High *is* terrible;
He is a great King over all the earth.
3 He shall subdue the people under us,
And the nations under our feet.
4 He shall choose our inheritance for us,
The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

of hands (2 Kings xi. 12) and shouting (1 Sam. x. 24). Cp. Num. xxiii. 21, where "the shout of a king" means the shout with which Israel celebrates the Presence of Jehovah in its midst as a victorious king.

triumph] The cognate verb is used in xx. 5 of the joyous shouting which welcomes the victorious king.

2. We may also render as in R.V. marg.,

For the LORD is most high (and) terrible,

or better still,

For Jehovah, the Most High, the terrible,
Is a great King over all the earth,

for the universal sovereignty of Jehovah is the prominent thought of the Psalm. He is not merely King of Israel (*v.* 6) but King of all the earth (*v.* 7). It is to Him that the title 'great King,' so arrogantly assumed by the king of Assyria (Is. xxxvi. 4), really belongs. This verse links together xlvi. 4 and xlviii. 2. For the epithet 'terrible' cp. lxxvi. 7, 12; Ex. xv. 11; Deut. vii. 21; x. 17.

3, 4. It is difficult to decide what is the exact force of the tenses in these verses. The most probable rendering (see Driver's *Tenses*, §§ 83 f., 173) appears to be either (1), **He subdued the peoples under us**...**He chose our inheritance for us**; referring to the settlement of Israel in Canaan as a proof of the universal sovereignty of Jehovah (Deut. xxxii. 8; Ex. xix. 5): or (2), **He hath subdued**...**hath chosen**; referring to the recent triumph by which He had once more driven out the enemies of His people from the land, and proved that He had chosen it for their inheritance. The first explanation is preferable, for the second requires a somewhat forced sense to be given to *hath chosen*, which can hardly be justified even by Is. xiv. 1, Zech. i. 17. Less satisfactory are the renderings *subdueth*...*chooseth* (R.V. marg.), expressing a general truth, though not perhaps without reference to its illustration by recent events: and *shall subdue*...*shall choose*, or *may he subdue*...*may he choose*.

3 *a* appears to be a reminiscence of xviii. 47.

our inheritance] The common word for Canaan as the possession destined for Jehovah's firstborn son Israel (Ex. xv. 17; Deut. iv. 21, 38; Jer. iii. 19; &c.).

the excellency] Better, **the pride of J.**, the land on which Israel prided itself. So the Temple is called "the pride of your power," Ezek. xxiv. 21.

whom he loved] Jehovah's love, not Israel's merit, was the ground of the choice. Cp. Deut. iv. 37; Mal. i. 2. R.V. marg. *loveth* is a less suitable rendering.

God is gone up with a shout, 5
The LORD with the sound of a trumpet.
Sing *praises* to God, sing *praises:* 6
Sing *praises* unto our King, sing *praises.*
For God *is* the King of all the earth: 7
Sing ye *praises* with understanding.
God reigneth over the heathen: 8
God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.
The princes of the people are gathered together, 9

5—7. A renewed summons to celebrate Jehovah's sovereignty.

5. *God is gone up*] He must therefore have previously 'come down.' God is said to 'come down' when He manifests His presence by active interposition in the affairs of the world. (Gen. xi. 5, 7; Is. xxxi. 4; lxiv. 1, 3). He is said to 'go up,' when, His work over, He as it were returns to heaven (lxviii. 18). The triumphal procession, carrying up (at least in ancient times) the Ark which was the symbol of God's presence to the Temple which was the symbol of heaven, and celebrating the victory which He had won for them with shouts and blowing of trumpets, was the outward and visible emblem of this 'ascension,' and suggests the form of the expression here. Cp. 2 Sam. vi. 15.

6. *Sing* praises] The verb from which *mizmōr*, 'a psalm,' is derived. See Introd. p. xvii.

7. *with understanding*] So the LXX, Vulg., and Jer. But better as R.V. marg., **in a skilful psalm**, Heb. *Maschil.* See *Introd.* p. xviii.

8, 9. The final realisation of Jehovah's sovereignty over the world.

8. God hath proclaimed himself king over the nations,
God hath taken his seat upon his holy throne.

The verbs express not merely a fact but an act. God was King, but He has given fresh proof of it. He has caused Himself to be acknowledged King, and taken His seat upon His throne to judge and rule (ciii. 19). Cp. Rev. xi. 15.

9. In the spirit of prophecy the Psalmist beholds the realisation of the hope expressed in *v.* 1. The nations acknowledge Jehovah's sovereignty. Cp. cii. 22. As the representatives of the nations which they rule, *the princes of the peoples are gathered together* to Jerusalem to pay homage to Jehovah. The Massoretic text of the next line must be rendered with R.V., 'To be *the people of the God of Abraham':* a bold phrase, reaching the very climax of Messianic hope, and hardly paralleled elsewhere. For though the nations are frequently spoken of as attaching themselves to Israel in the worship of Jehovah (Is. ii. 2 ff; xi. 10; lvi. 6 ff.; lx. 3 ff.; Zech. viii. 20 ff.; &c. &c.), they are not called "the people of God." This title is reserved for Israel, and only in the N.T. are the promises made to Israel extended to the Gentiles (Rom. ix. 25). Yet see Is. xix. 25, where Egypt receives the title 'my people.' The rendering of R.V. marg. 'Unto *the people*,' is scarcely legitimate. It is

Even the people of the God of Abraham:
For the shields of the earth *belong* unto God:
He is greatly exalted.

however to be noted that the consonants of the word *'am* 'people' are identical with those of *'im*, 'with,' and the LXX read them as the preposition (*with the God of A.*). It is a natural conjecture that we should restore the preposition and render;

The princes of the peoples are gathered together,
Along with the people of the God of Abraham.

the God of Abraham] The title recalls the promises of blessing to the nations made through Abraham (Gen. xii. 2 f. &c.).

the shields of the earth] Princes are so called, as the protectors of their people. Jehovah is their overlord, and they come to acknowledge their dependence. The title *shield* is often applied to God, and sometimes to the kings and princes of Israel (Hos. iv. 18; Ps. lxxxix. 18).

he is greatly exalted] Cp. xcvii. 9; and, though the Heb. word is different, xlvi. 10.

PSALM XLVIII.

In the crisis of her uttermost peril Jehovah has proved Himself the protector of Zion (1—8): and the citizens of the rescued city are bidden to deepen their sense of His mercy by reflecting on the marvellousness of the deliverance vouchsafed to them (9—14). The Ps. is the companion and counterpart to Ps. xlvi. There the Presence of God in the midst of Zion as the guarantee of her safety, here the safety of Zion which is the result of that Presence, is the leading idea. Reasons have already been given for believing that the Psalm celebrates the escape of Jerusalem from Sennacherib's threatened vengeance. It is the work of an eyewitness of the deliverance: it appeals to those who knew from what imminent peril they had been saved. The parallels with Isaiah's prophecies of the time, especially with ch. xxxiii, written partly before (1—12), partly after (13—24) the destruction of Sennacherib's host, should be carefully studied.

This Ps. is appointed as a proper Ps. for Whitsunday. Zion is the type of the Christian Church, and the Ps. which celebrates the glory of Zion and her safety under the care of her Divine protector is an appropriate Psalm for the festival which is the birthday of the Church.

A Song *and* Psalm for the sons of Korah.

48 Great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised

Title. **A Song; a Psalm of the Sons of Korah** (R.V.). *A Song* is the general term: *a Psalm* further defines it as intended for instrumental accompaniment. See *Introd.* p. xvii f. The LXX adds, "for the second day of the week," and we know from the Mishnah that the Psalm was

In the city of our God, *in* the mountain of his holiness.
Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, *is* mount 2
Zion,
On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.

recited on that day by the Levites in the Temple Services. See *Introd.* p. xxiv.

1, 2. The theme of the Psalm: the greatness of Jehovah and the glory of His city.

1. *greatly to be praised*] The R.V. returns to Coverdale's rendering (P.B.V.), **highly to be praised.** The same emphatic adverb occurs in each of the two preceding Pss. God has proved Himself to be an *exceedingly* present help in trouble (xlvi. 1); by His triumph over the nations He is *exceedingly* exalted (xlvii. 9); and therefore He is *exceedingly* worthy to be praised. Jehovah is the one object of Israel's praise (Deut. x. 21): Israel's praises are as it were the throne upon which He sits (Ps. xxii. 3): the keynote of worship is *Hallelujah*, 'praise ye Jah'; and the Hebrew title of the Psalter is *Tehillim*, i.e. *Praises*. *v.* 1 *a* recurs in cxlv. 3 *a*.

in the city of our God] Cp. *v.* 8; xlvi. 4, note.

in *the mountain of his holiness*] R.V., **in his holy mountain**; i.e. Zion, which here and throughout the Psalm (*vv.* 2, 11, 12) denotes the whole city, not merely one of the hills on which it was built. Cp. ii. 6, note. For another possible translation see note on *v.* 2.

2. *Beautiful for situation*] Rather, as R.V., **beautiful in elevation.** Cp. l. 2. "Its elevation," writes Dean Stanley, "is remarkable; occasioned not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judaea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest tablelands of the country....To the traveller approaching Jerusalem from the west or east, it must always have presented the appearance...of a mountain city; breathing, as compared with the plains of Jordan, a mountain air; enthroned, as compared with Jericho and Damascus, Gaza or Tyre, on a mountain fastness" (*Sinai and Palestine*: pp. 170, 171). May not the poet also have in mind that 'ideal' elevation of which the prophets speak? e.g. Is. ii. 2; Mic. iv. 1.

the joy of the whole earth] Lam. ii. 15 combines this phrase with that of Ps. l. 2. "Is this the city that men called, The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" Cp. Is. lx. 15.

on *the sides of the north*] Thus rendered, the words appear to be a topographical description of the situation of Mount Zion to the north of the city; or, if we render, *on the sides of the north is the citadel of the great King*, a description of the position of the Temple. But 'Mount Zion' in this Psalm is not a part of the city but the whole city (*vv.* 11, 12); a merely topographical description would be frigid in the extreme; the rendering involves a doubtful construction; and it gives a very inadequate meaning to the phrase *the sides of the north*. This phrase occurs elsewhere in Is. xiv. 13; Ezek. xxxviii. 6, 15; xxxix. 2; and in all these

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.
4 For lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

passages it means the recesses or remotest quarters of the north. In Is. xiv. 13 "the uttermost parts of the north" (R.V.) are mentioned as the locality of the sacred mountain, which according to Asiatic mythology was the abode of the gods. This mountain, corresponding to the Olympus of the Greeks, was the *Meru* of the Indians, the *Alborg* of the Persians, the *Arālu* of the Assyrians and Babylonians. It would seem that the Psalmist boldly calls Mount Zion *the uttermost parts of the north* with reference to this mythological idea. According to this interpretation *vv.* 1, 2 may be rendered as follows:

Great is Jehovah, and exceeding worthy to be praised,
In the city of our God is his holy mountain.
Beautiful in elevation, a joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion,
The uttermost parts of the north, the citadel of the great King.

The sacred mountain of our God is not in the remote recesses of the north, but in the very midst of the city of His choice. Zion is in reality all that the Assyrians claim for their fabled mount of the gods. Their king too may style himself 'great,' but Zion is the citadel of One Who is in truth the great King, for He is the King of all the earth (xlvii. 2, 7). "The great king" was a title claimed by the king of Assyria (Is. xxxvi. 4); and the word for 'great' is not that used in *v.* 1 (*gādōl*) but *rab*, which corresponds to the Assyrian title *sarru rabbu* (Schrader, *Cuneif. Inscr.* p. 320). 'City' (*citadel*) is not the same word as in *v.* 1 (*'īr*), but *kiryāh*, a word which does not occur again in the Psalter, but is found several times in Isaiah (xxii. 2; xxix. 1; xxxiii. 20). To many commentators it seems inconceivable that the Psalmist should allude to Assyrian mythology. But a writer of Isaiah's time might easily have become acquainted with the religious ideas of the Assyrians, and the author of the Book of Job does not hesitate to introduce popular mythological ideas. See Prof. Davidson's note on Job xxvi. 12: and cp. Is. xxvii. 1.

3—8. Jehovah's revelation of Himself as Zion's protector in the recent discomfiture of her enemies.

3. More exactly:
God hath made himself known in her palaces for a high fortress.

This verse is commonly connected with *vv.* 1, 2. But *vv.* 1, 2 describe the relation of Zion to Jehovah generally, while *v.* 3 first alludes to the recent deliverance, which is further described in *vv.* 4 ff.

in her palaces] The stately palaces of Zion which the Assyrians threatened to plunder and destroy. Cp. *v.* 13; Mic. v. 5. **High fortress** (A.V. *refuge*) is the same word as that in xlvi. 7, 11.

4. **For, lo, the kings assembled themselves** (R.V.): Sennacherib's vassal kings (Is. x. 8) met at their rendezvous (cp. Ps. ii. 2): **they passed over together**; uniting their forces they crossed the frontier and entered the land of Judah. Cp. Is. viii. 7, 8; xxviii. 15. The rendering *passed away* (R.V. marg.) is possible but unsuitable, for (1) *assembled them-*

They saw *it*, *and* so they marvelled; 5
They were troubled, *and* hasted away.
Fear took hold upon them there, 6
And pain, as of a woman in travail.
Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind. 7
As we have heard, so have we seen 8
In the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God:
God will establish it for ever. Selah.
We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, 9

selves needs some further explanation, and (2) it interrupts the order of the description: it is not until they have seen Jerusalem (*v.* 5) that they disperse in confusion. P.B.V. *kings of the earth* is from the Vulg. Cp. lxxvi. 12.

5. They saw; forthwith they were amazed:
They were dismayed, they made haste to flee.

Caesar's boast, *Veni, vidi, vici*, was reversed. They came to Zion, they saw it, they were smitten with panic terror. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 3.

6. Trembling took hold of them there:
Pangs, as of a woman in travail.

Cp. Ex. xv. 14, 15; and for the phrase though in a different connexion, Is. xxxiii. 14, "Trembling hath taken hold of the godless."

7. With an east wind
Thou shatterest ships of Tarshish.

As he gazes upon the wreck of the Assyrian enterprise, the poet apostrophises God with mingled awe and thankfulness. The language is plainly metaphorical. God's might is irresistible. He shatters the stately ships of Tarshish with a sudden storm: with equal ease He annihilates the vast Assyrian army. Cp. Is. xiv. 24—27, noting the phrase, "I will *break* the Assyrian in my land." For the metaphor comp. Ezek. xxvii. 26, where the fall of Tyre is described as a wreck; and Is. xxxiii. 23, where Jerusalem in her extremity (or, according to some commentators, the Assyrian power) is represented as a disabled ship.

The *east wind*, notorious for its destructiveness, is often employed as a symbol of judgement (Job xxvii. 21; Is. xxvii. 8; Jer. xviii. 17); and *ships of Tarshish*,—the largest vessels, such as were employed for the voyage to Tartessus in the S.W. of Spain (cp. 'East Indiamen')—were emblems of all that was strong and stately (Is. ii. 16). The alternative rendering of R.V. marg., 'As *with the east wind that breaketh the ships of Tarshish*,' is grammatically possible, but less suitable.

8. Experience has confirmed what tradition (cp. xliv. 1) related of God's marvellous works on behalf of His people, and justifies the confidence that He will never cease to guard the city of His choice. Cp. lxxxvii. 5; Is. lxii. 7. But all such anticipations are conditional: Israel's unfaithfulness made a literal fulfilment impossible.

9—14. The lessons of deliverance.

9. We have thought on thy lovingkindness, O God, realised it to

In the midst of thy temple.
10 According to thy name, O God, so *is* thy praise unto the ends of the earth:
Thy right hand is full *of* righteousness.
11 Let mount Zion rejoice,
Let the daughters of Judah be glad,
Because of thy judgments.
12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces;

ourselves as manifested in this new deliverance, while we offered our thanksgivings in the Temple courts; for there, in the immediate presence of God, men learn the true significance of events (lxxiii. 17). It suits the context less well to render *We thought on* &c., and to understand the words to refer to prayers offered before the great deliverance, in which past mercies were recalled as a ground of confidence.

10. *According to thy name*] **As is thy name** (R.V.). God's revelation of His power and lovingkindness receives worldwide celebration. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 13. To other nations beside Judah the destruction of the great tyrant's army was a cause for rejoicing. Cp. xlvi. 8 ff.; Nah. iii. 19.

thy right hand is full of *righteousness*] Ready to be exercised on behalf of Thy people in judgements on their enemies (*v.* 11). Cp. Is. xxxiii. 5.

11. The R.V. assimilates the rendering to that of xcvii. 8, where the same words recur:

Let mount Zion be glad,
Let the daughters of Judah rejoice.

The *daughters of Judah* are not the maidens of Judah, though the fact that women were wont to celebrate victories with dance and song may have suggested the use of the expression, but the cities of Judah, which had been captured by Sennacherib (Is. xxxvi. 1), and therefore had special cause for rejoicing at his overthrow. Country towns are regarded as 'daughters' of the metropolis. Cp. Num. xxi. 25; Josh. xvii. 11, 16; the word for *towns* in both cases literally means *daughters*.

12 ff. The inhabitants of Jerusalem had been confined within its walls during the siege: now they can freely walk round, and thankfully contemplate the safety of the walls and towers and palaces so lately menaced with destruction. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 20.

tell] I.e. *count*, as in xxii. 17; Gen. xv. 5. The retention of the archaism in R.V. is justifiable for the sake of the connexion with *v.* 13, where the same word is used for *tell*=*narrate*. But lately the towers had been counted with a very different object by the Assyrian officers reconnoitring the city in preparation for the siege (Is. xxxiii. 18).

13. *bulwarks*] The outer wall or rampart.

consider] Or, as R.V. marg., *traverse*. The word occurs here only,

That ye may tell *it* to the generation following.
For this God *is* our God for ever and ever:
He will be our guide *even* unto death. 14

and is of doubtful meaning. But the rendering *consider* suits the context better. In either case the object is to convince themselves of the safety of the city. P. B. V. *set up* is derived from some Jewish authorities.

that ye may tell it] Cp. xxii. 30, 31; xliv. 1.

14. *For this God* &c.] **For such is God** [Jehovah] **our God for ever and ever.** Jehovah is a God who has proved Himself the defender of His city and people, and will continue to be the same for ever.

he will be our guide even *unto death*] Beautiful as is the thought, *He* (emphatic—He and no other) *will be our guide unto death* (or, *in death*, or, *over death*), it cannot be legitimately extracted from the present text, nor would such an expression of *personal* faith form a natural conclusion to this wholly *national* Psalm. Possibly the words *'al mūth* (rendered *unto death*) should be read as one, with different vowels, *'ōlāmōth*, 'for ever.' So the LXX and Symmachus. Possibly the words are the remains of a musical direction like that of Ps. ix, *'al muth labbēn*, meaning 'set to the tune of *mūth*,' or that of Ps. xlvi, 'set to *'Alāmōth*,' which has been placed at the end of the Ps. (as in Hab. iii. 19) instead of at the beginning, as is the rule in the Psalter, or which has been accidentally transferred from the beginning of Ps. xlix. In this case the clause *he will guide us* seems incomplete, (though *he will save us* in Is. xxxiii. 22 offers an exact parallel), and we must either with Delitzsch suppose that the concluding words are lost; or, with Bickell, Cheyne, and others, transpose words from the first line to the second, and read *For* (or, *That*) *such is God* [Jehovah] *our God: He will guide us for ever and ever.* Cp. Is. xxv. 9.

PSALM XLIX.

The preceding group of Psalms contains an appeal to "all peoples" to recognise in Jehovah the Ruler of the world in virtue of His mighty deeds for Israel: this Psalm addresses "all peoples" with a theme of common interest to all humanity.

The author is a moralist. He offers teaching concerning one of those enigmas of life which perplex men and try their faith. Is not wealth after all the master-force in the world? Must not the poor tremble before its power and pay court to its splendour? Is not the lot of those who possess the means of luxurious enjoyment, however selfish, most enviable?

The Psalmist's solution of the problem is to point out the limits to the power of wealth and to its owner's tenure of it. All the wealth in the world cannot purchase exemption from death; and it must all be abandoned when its owner comes to die. Quite briefly the Psalmist expresses his own faith that righteousness will be finally triumphant

(*v.* 14), and that God will do for him what all his wealth cannot do for the rich man (*v.* 15).

Does he here break through the veil of darkness which rested over the world beyond for Israel of old, and declare his belief, if not in a resurrection, at least in a translation from the gloom of Sheol to a blessed state of communion with God? This question is a difficult one, but reasons will be given in the notes for thinking that the Psalmist's view did not reach beyond the present life, though it contains the germ of the principle by which men were raised, through sore struggles of faith, to grasp the hope of eternal life. See also *Introd.* pp. lxxv ff.

The theme of the Ps. is akin to that of Pss. xxxvii and lxxiii. But while those Psalms treat of the temptations to murmuring and disbelief which spring from the sight of high-handed wickedness prospering unchecked, we have here only incidental hints (*vv.* 5, 14) that the rich men who are spoken of are oppressors of the poor, or have amassed their wealth by injustice. They are not expressly condemned as tyrannous and oppressive, though no doubt they tended to become so. But they make a god of their wealth and pride themselves on their magnificence. Wrapped in a haughty self-satisfaction, they care for nothing but their own selfish pleasure. What appals the Psalmist is not so much their wickedness as their worldliness. They ignore God and yet they prosper. The Psalm reminds us of the parables of the Rich Fool (Luke xii. 16 ff.) and the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke xvi. 19 ff.). Its moral teaching is for all men and all time. Worldliness and envy are temptations which do not lose their power. Rich and poor alike constantly need to be reminded that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he possesseth."

This Ps. is closely connected with the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel, which, working side by side with Prophecy, was an important power in the education of the nation. It contains numerous parallels of thought and language to the Books of Job and Proverbs.

There is little to determine the date of the Psalm. But it may perhaps belong to the eighth century B.C., when the existence of great wealth and great poverty side by side in the reigns of Uzziah and Jotham could not fail to suggest the problem here discussed. There seems to be an allusion in *v.* 11 to the vast estates which are condemned by Isaiah and Micah. If so, it will be somewhat earlier than Psalms xlvi—xlviii. The structure of the Ps. is clearly marked. It consists of an introduction and two equal divisions, each of which is closed by a refrain.

i. A solemn invitation to listen, addressed to men of every nation, every rank, and every class, for the theme is one of universal interest (1—4).

ii. Why should the power of wealth be feared, though men make a god of their riches? Wealth cannot save from death: and its owner must inevitably surrender it when he dies (5—12).

iii. Sheol is the destination of the richest and most powerful. But the upright will be finally triumphant; and the Psalmist in fellowship with God has a hope which no wealth can purchase. There is nothing to fear in worldly magnificence, for it is doomed to a speedy end (13—20).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

Hear this, all ye people; 49
Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:
Both low and high, 2
Rich and poor, together.
My mouth shall speak of wisdom; 3
And the meditation of my heart *shall be of* understanding.
I will incline mine ear to a parable: 4
I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

1—4. A solemn introduction, addressed to men of every nation and every class, emphasising the importance of the Psalmist's theme.

1. *all ye people*] Rather, **all ye peoples**, as in xlvii. 1. All peoples, all the inhabitants of the world, are summoned to listen, for the theme is one of universal interest; it concerns all humanity. It is characteristic of the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel to view the problems of life in their wider aspect. It treats of man as man, not of Israel as the chosen people. The first line recalls the opening words of Micah's prophecy (Mic. i. 2), and the words of his older namesake (1 Kings xxii. 28). For the form of the verse cp. Elihu's words (Job xxxiv. 2).

the world] A peculiar word, found in this sense only in Ps. xvii. 14. It denotes the lapse of time, the fleeting age, the world as uncertain and transitory.

2. *Both low and high*] So the A.V. rightly paraphrases the Heb. *sons of mankind* (*ādām*) *and sons of men* (*'īsh*): those whose personality is lost in the common multitude, and those who are individually distinguished; plebeians and patricians. *Adām* corresponds to *ἄνθρωπος*, *homo*; *'ish* to *ἀνήρ*, *vir*. Cp. iv. 2; lxii. 9. The P.B.V. (*high and low*) wrongly inverts the meanings.

rich and poor together] The rich that they may recognise the vanity of riches, and take warning: the poor that they may learn to be contented with their lot, and not to envy the rich.

3. My mouth shall speak wisdom,
And the meditation of my heart shall be (full of) understanding.

The words for *wisdom* and *understanding* are both plural in the Heb., denoting manifold wisdom and profound insight.

4. The poet receives by revelation what he desires to teach. He will bend his ear to listen to the voice of God before he ventures himself to speak to men. *Māshāl*, rendered *parable*, means (1) primarily *a comparison*, (2) *a proverb*, as frequently involving a comparison, (3) *a parable*, as the extension of a proverb, (4) *a poem*, either contemptuous (Is. xiv. 4) or didactic, as here. *Chīdāh*, denotes (1) *an enigma* or *riddle* (Judg. xiv. 12 f.; 1 Kings x. 1), (2) a *parable* or *simile* (Ezek. xvii. 2), (3) any *profound* or *obscure utterance*, *a problem*, *dark saying*. Both words occur together in lxxviii. 2; Prov. i. 6; Ezek. xvii. 2. The prosperity of the godless was one of the great 'enigmas of life' to the pious

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil,
When the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?
6 They that trust in their wealth,
And boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;
7 None *of them* can by any means redeem *his* brother,

Israelite, demanding a solution which could only be partially given before the fuller revelation of Christ "brought life and immortality to light." What he has learned on this perplexing question he will *open upon the harp*, set it forth in a poem accompanied by music.

5—12. The limits to the power and the possession of wealth.

5. *in the days of evil*] Or, **of the evil man**: when evil or evil men seem to have the upper hand, uncontrolled by any divine law of righteousness. Cp. xciv. 13.

when *the iniquity of my heels* &c.] Apparently this means, when his own false steps and errors of conduct surround him and threaten to prove his ruin. But apart from the strangeness of the expression, this meaning does not suit the context. It is better to render with R.V.,

When iniquity at my heels compasseth me about,

when the injustice of wealthy neighbours dogs his footsteps and threatens to trip him up. But better still is the rendering of R.V. marg., which gives a clear sense, and a good connexion with *v.* 6,

When the iniquity of them that would supplant me compasseth me about,
Even of them that trust.....riches?

He is in danger from wealthy and unscrupulous neighbours, who are eager to trip him up and get him into their power. Cp. Jer. ix. 4.

7. The first answer to the question, 'Wherefore should I fear'? These men make a god of their wealth. They trust in it and glory in it, as the godly man trusts in Jehovah and glories in Him (xxxii. 10; xxxiv. 2). But how powerless it is! It cannot deliver anyone from death. If the rich man's friends have so little to hope, his victims have little to fear.

The language of this verse and the next is borrowed from the ancient law in Ex. xxi. 30, where the words *ransom* and *redemption of life* (or *soul*) occur together, the latter phrase being found nowhere else. If a man's neglect to keep a dangerous ox under proper control had been the cause of another man's death, his life was forfeit. But he might redeem his life by paying a ransom to the relatives of the deceased person. Probably he would always be allowed to do so, and the penalty of death would never be exacted. Another law prohibited the pardon of a murderer upon the mere payment of a fine (Num. xxxv. 31), lest rich men should regard the taking of life as a matter of indifference. Thus the idea of the payment of money as the equivalent of a life was familiar. There were cases in which wealth could deliver from death, when man was dealing with man. But when God claims the life, riches are of no avail.

his *brother*] Lit. *a brother*: his most intimate relative or friend.

Nor give to God a ransom for him:
(For the redemption of their soul is precious, 8
And it ceaseth for ever:)
That he should still live for ever, 9
And not see corruption.
For he seeth *that* wise *men* die, 10
Likewise the fool and the brutish person perish,
And leave their wealth to others.

Possibly there may be an allusion to the use of the word in dirges. See Jer. xxii. 18. But the position of the word at the beginning of the sentence is peculiar, and an adversative particle seems to be needed. It has therefore been plausibly conjectured that we should read *ăk*, 'surely' or 'but' (as in *v.* 15), in place of *ăch*, 'brother,' and, with a slight alteration of the vowels, render thus:

But no one can by any means redeem himself,
Nor give to God the ransom He requires.

The reading of the Massoretic Text however is attested by the LXX and other Ancient Versions.

8. Render:

For too costly is the redemption of their life,
And he must let it alone for ever.

The sum to be paid by the man whose life was forfeit was to be assessed, probably in proportion to his culpability and his means: but there is no ransom which can be paid to God; it is hopeless to think of attempting it. Cp. Matt. v. 26. *Their* refers to *brother*, regarded generically; or, if the reading *But* is adopted, to the rich men.

9. The preceding verse is a parenthesis, and this verse is to be connected with *v.* 7 and rendered,

That he should live on perpetually,
(And) should not see the pit.

'To see the pit'=to experience death. The word *shachath*, rendered *corruption* in the A.V., must mean 'pit' in some passages where it occurs (e.g. vii. 15; xxx. 9), and may have this meaning always. Cp. note on xvi. 10.

10. *For he seeth* that *wise* men *die*] Experience shews the rich man that all alike come to the grave. Even wisdom cannot deliver its possessor. This rendering is on the whole preferable to that of R.V. marg., *Yea, he* (the brother or the rich man) *shall see it* (the pit): *wise men die* &c. 'Wise' and 'fool' are words characteristic of the Wisdom literature. The former occurs but once again in the Psalter, and 46 times in Proverbs: the latter but twice in the Psalter, and 49 times in Proverbs.

likewise &c.] **Fool and brutish perish together.** Perhaps the use of different verbs is intended to distinguish between the end of the wise man and the end of the fool and the brutish, the self-confident braggart and the mere stupid animal.

and leave &c.] Or, **abandon.** The point of course is not that they

11 Their inward *thought is*, *that* their houses *shall continue* for ever,
And their dwelling places to all generations;
They call *their* lands after their own names.
12 Nevertheless man *being* in honour abideth not:
He is like the beasts *that* perish.
13 This their way *is* their folly:
Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

can pass on their property to their heirs, but that they must themselves surrender it. Wealth can neither prolong life, nor be retained by its owner at death. Cp. Luke xii. 20.

11. *Their inward* thought is &c.] If they do reflect that they must die, they comfort themselves with the delusion that their houses will last for ever, and their names be perpetuated in the names of their estates, which like builders of cities or conquerors (2 Sam. xii. 28) they have named after themselves. But the rendering *their inward thought* is questionable; and the LXX, Vulg., Syr., and Targ., all point to a different reading, involving simply a transposition of letters (QBRM for QRBM), which gives the sense:

Graves are their houses for ever;
The dwelling-places for all generations
Of those who called lands after their own names.

This reading suits the context best. They must surrender their wealth, and a narrow grave will be the only possession left to the man who called a vast estate by his own name. The first line recalls the name 'eternal house' applied to the grave in Eccles. xii. 5, and in inscriptions: cp. 'eternal place,' Tobit iii. 6: and Isaiah calls Shebna's pretentious sepulchre a 'dwelling-place' (Is. xxii. 16). Is there an ironical allusion in the last line to the vast estates of Isaiah's day (Is. v. 8)?

12. If we retain the reading of the Massoretic Text in *v.* 11, we may render with R.V., **But man abideth not in honour.**

If the reading *graves* is adopted, *v.* 12 sums up the picture:

So man in splendour hath no continuance.

However imposing may be man's magnificence, it must come to an end. The LXX and Syr. read here, as in *v.* 20, *Man being in honour understandeth not.* But refrains are not always identical in form, and the difference in the Heb. text is significant.

that perish] Or, *are cut off*, a different word from that in *v.* 10.

13—15. The fate of the godless rich man is further described, and contrasted with the Psalmist's confidence.

13. A difficult verse. The best rendering appears to be:

This is the way of them that are self-confident,
And of their followers who [lit. *those who after them*] **approve their sayings.**

The verse sums up the preceding verses, like Job xviii. 21; xx. 29. So it fares with these self-confident fools and their deluded followers

Like sheep they are laid in the grave;
Death shall feed *on* them;
And the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning;
And their beauty shall consume *in* the grave from their dwelling.
But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave:
For he shall receive me. Selah.

(lxxiii. 10; Job xxi. 33). Then, after an interlude, the fate of the wicked is more fully described in *v.* 14, in contrast with the hope of the godly, *v.* 15.

The word *kēṣel* denotes the stupid self-confidence which is characteristic of the 'fool' (*k'sīl*, *v.* 10). Cp. Job xxxi. 24. Aquila and Jerome render *run* instead of *approve*. The difference is simply one of vocalisation, and in their day the text had no written vowels. With this reading we might render: *And of those who run after them at their beck.*

14. Like sheep are they put into Sheol;
Death shepherdeth them;
And the upright have dominion over them in the morning,
And their form shall Sheol consume, that it have no more habitation.

What becomes of the wicked? They are driven down to Sheol like a flock of sheep, mere animals that they are (*v.* 12); there Death is their shepherd: the king of terrors rules them at his will. They perish in the night, and in the morning the righteous awake, triumphant over their fallen oppressors. The night of trouble is over; the morning of deliverance has dawned (xxx. 5). But what is meant by 'the morning'? Not, as yet, the resurrection morning; but the morning of the day which Jehovah is making, in which "all the proud, and all that work wickedness, shall be as stubble...and ye shall tread down the wicked, for they shall be as ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I do make, saith the LORD of hosts" (Mal. iv. 1, 3): a day in the history of the world corresponding to the day when the restored Israel "shall rule over their oppressors" (Is. xiv. 2). Comp. Ps. civ. 35, and Ps. xxxvii.

The precise meaning of the last line is doubtful and the text possibly corrupt. Their form, or perhaps, their beauty, is delivered up to Sheol to consume: a poetical way of expressing that their bodies moulder in the grave: all that made such a brave show upon earth has no more existence, no longer needs any abode. Possibly we should make a slight change in the text, and render, *Their form shall be consumed, Sheol shall be their habitation.* Cp. A.V. marg.

15. While the wicked become the prey of Sheol, the Psalmist is delivered from its power. But in what sense? In this life, or after death? A careful study of the context and of similar phrases elsewhere seems to shew that the Psalmist looks with confidence for deliverance from the premature and penal death of the wicked, but does not antici-

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich,
When the glory of his house is increased;

pate escape from death or express his belief in a resurrection. The verse corresponds to *vv.* 7, 8. While wealth is powerless to avert death, God can and will deliver His servant. Similar phrases are constantly used of deliverance from imminent peril of death. Cp. xxx. 3; xxxiii. 18 f.; lxxxvi. 13; ciii. 4; cxxxviii. 7; and particularly lxxxix. 48; Job xxxiii. 22 ff.; Hosea xiii. 14; see also xvi. 10, and note there. *For he shall receive me* is to be explained by the use of the same word in xviii. 16 (A.V. *he took me*): He will take hold of me and deliver me. It is possible that the verse should be divided thus: *But God will redeem my life* [*soul*]: *out of the grasp of Sheol will he surely take me.*

Delitzsch indeed thinks that *he shall receive me* contains an allusion to the history of Enoch (Gen. v. 24), where the same word is used, "He was not; for God *took him.*" He holds that in a moment of lofty aspiration the Psalmist expresses a bold hope that he may escape death, and be taken directly into the presence of God. But this interpretation is improbable: it does not appear that he, any more than the author of Ps. lxxxix, anticipates that any mortal man can finally escape death.

Many commentators find in the passage "the strong hope of eternal life with God, if not the hope of a resurrection." But the context and the parallel passages lead to a different conclusion. Certainly the doctrine of a future life was not to the Psalmist a revealed certainty to which he could appeal for a solution of the enigmas of life which were perplexing him. Probably, as has been said before on Ps. xvi, the truth is that the antithesis in the Psalmist's mind is not between life here and life hereafter (as we speak), but between life with and life without God; and for the moment, in the consciousness of the blessedness of fellowship with God, death fades from his view. The rich man's wealth, which he is tempted to envy, cannot buy from God one moment's prolongation of life; nay, the wicked are doomed to a premature and miserable death: while the Psalmist rejoices in the assured protection and fellowship of God.

But whatever may have been the extent or the limitation of the Psalmist's view, his words contain the germ and principle of the doctrine of the Resurrection; and for ourselves, as we use them, they will bear the fuller meaning with which they have been illuminated by Christ's Resurrection.

16—20. The rich man cannot carry his wealth with him when he dies. The thought already expressed in *v.* 10 is resumed and further developed.

16. *Be not thou afraid*] The Psalmist addresses himself, repeating the question of *v.* 5 in the form of an exhortation (the Heb. word is the same), or any individual who is listening to him.

glory] The magnificence and splendour which accompany wealth. Cp. Prov. iii. 16; viii. 18.

For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: 17
His glory shall not descend after him.
Though whiles he lived he blessed his soul: 18
And *men* will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself.
He shall go to the generation of his fathers; 19
They shall never see light.
Man *that is* in honour, and understandeth not, 20
Is like the beasts *that* perish.

17. Cp. Job i. 21; Eccl. v. 15; 1 Tim. vi. 7; and parallels from classical authors: e.g. Propertius IV. 5. 13:

Haud ullas portabis opes Acherontis ad undas:
Nudus at inferna, stulte, vehere, rate.

18. *blessed his soul*] Congratulated himself on his good fortune, flattering himself that he was beyond the reach of misfortune. Cp. Deut. xxix. 19; Luke xii. 19.

men *will praise thee*] **Men praise thee** (R.V.). The words are a parenthesis, addressed to the rich man. The unthinking multitude (cp. *v.* 13 *b*) worship success and wealth. They see nothing wrong in the selfish misuse of riches.

19. *He shall go*] There should be a comma at the end of *v.* 18, as in R.V., for *v.* 19 forms the apodosis to it. The Heb. verb may be either the 3rd person fem., the subject being *the soul*, or the 2nd person masc.; so either, 'Though he blessed his soul...it shall go' &c.: or, 'Though men praise thee...thou shalt go.' The first alternative is preferable. The second involves an intolerably harsh change of person ('*Thou* shalt go...*his* fathers'). For the phrase cp. Gen. xv. 15, "Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace." The more usual expression for dying is, "he was gathered to his people," or, "his fathers." Families are contemplated as reunited in Sheol, where existence is a shadowy reflection of life on earth.

they shall never see light] 'They' refers to the rich men. The Heb. mind passes from the class to the individual and from the individual to the class with a facility to which we are not accustomed. But it is perhaps better to take the phrase as a relative clause referring to 'his fathers'; **Who shall never more see the light.** He goes to join the ranks of those whose lot is fixed irrevocably, who will never return to life. For the phrase cp. lviii. 8; Job iii. 16; Eccl. vi. 5.

20. The refrain of *v.* 12, repeated with a significant variation, qualifying the previous statement. It is not the rich and honourable man, as such, who is no better than the cattle that perish; but the rich man who is destitute of discernment, and knows no distinction between false and true riches, reckoning earthly and transitory wealth more precious than spiritual and eternal fellowship with God.

PSALM L.

This Psalm, like the preceding one, is a didactic Psalm. But while the lesson of Psalm xlix is an echo of the teaching of the 'Wise Men,' that of Ps. l is an echo of the teaching of the Prophets: and while, in accordance with the characteristic method of 'Wisdom,' "all peoples" are addressed in Ps. xlix, in accordance with the characteristic method of Prophecy the people of Jehovah is addressed in Ps. l.

The Psalm is a solemn vision of judgement. It is finely dramatic in form. As in Isaiah i and Micah vi, Jehovah puts Israel upon its trial in the presence of all Nature. He is at once Plaintiff and Judge. The two speeches in which He exposes the shortcomings of His people are introduced by a prologue, and summed up in a brief epilogue.

i. In a solemn introduction the Advent of God to judge His people is described. As He came of old from Sinai in the midst of storm and lightning to promulgate the Law, so now He is represented as appearing from Zion surrounded by these symbols of His majesty to enforce it. Heaven and earth are summoned to be witnesses of the trial (1—6).

ii. God speaks; and first He addresses the mass of the people, who imagine that their duty to Him is fulfilled by the formal offering of material sacrifices. He shews them that He has no need of material sacrifices. What He desires is the sacrifice of the heart, expressed in sincere thankfulness and loyal trust (7—15).

iii. Then in a sterner tone He addresses the hypocrites who glibly repeat His laws with their lips, but shamelessly break them in act by gross offences against their neighbours (16—21).

iv. The Psalm concludes with an epilogue of warning and promise (22, 23).

Thus the Ps. deals with man's duty towards God and his duty towards his neighbour; with the nature of acceptable service, and the obligations of social morality. Its two main divisions answer to the two great divisions of the Decalogue. The whole corresponds to the teaching which was constantly being repeated by the prophets, and is briefly summed up in the sentence, "I desire lovingkindness, and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." The principle comes down from the first of the prophets (1 Sam. xv. 22), and finds its most forcible exposition in Isaiah i. 11 ff., to which the Psalm is intimately related, and Mic. vi. 6 ff. The same thought is expressed in the Wisdom-literature in Prov. xxi. 3, and Ecclesiasticus xxxv. 1—7; and elsewhere in the Psalter, e.g. in Ps. xl. 6 ff.; li. 16 ff.; lxix. 30 f.; xv; xxiv. 1 ff. But none of these passages is to be understood as an absolute condemnation of sacrifice. Sacrifice was the recognised bond of the relation between God and men, though it was not, as men were prone to think, the sum and substance of that relation. The primitive institution of sacrifice was continued and developed in the Mosaic legislation. The covenant of Sinai was sanctioned by sacrifice, though it was not based upon it; the Decalogue contained no injunction to offer sacrifice. It is not the sacrificial system in itself, but the sacrificial system emptied of "its moral significance as the recognition of the holiness of God and the

sinfulness of the sinner," and made a substitute for the higher duties of devotion and morality, or combined with a glaring defiance of those duties, which is denounced by prophet and psalmist as a thing which God hates. See Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

To what date is the Psalm to be assigned? Clearly it belongs to a time when sacrificial worship was scrupulously maintained, but a low standard of morality was united with punctilious ceremonial observance. We know from the prophets Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah, that this was conspicuously the case in the eighth century B.C., and to this period the Psalm may most safely be assigned. Delitzsch indeed regarded it as an original Psalm of David's musician Asaph, but the tendency to formalism does not seem to have been specially characteristic of that time. Some critics place it after the Exile, alleging that *v.* 5 implies the dispersion of the nation. But this inference cannot legitimately be drawn from the verse: and on the other hand, would any poet after the Return have ventured to call Zion 'the perfection of beauty,' in view of the past glories of the city and Temple which were never restored? Moreover Lam. ii. 15, "Is this the city that men called The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth"? combines *v.* 2 and xlviii. 2: and Ps. xcvii, which is acknowledged to belong to the time of the Return, is based upon reminiscences of this Psalm together with Pss. xlvii, xlviii.

This Psalm may then best be referred to the same period as the preceding Psalms. A somewhat later date, in the reign of Josiah, has been suggested, but the close relation between the Psalm and Isaiah i is in favour of the earlier date.

A Psalm of Asaph.

The mighty God, *even* the LORD, hath spoken, and called 50
the earth

On the title *A Psalm of Asaph*, and the general characteristics of the Asaph Psalms see Intr. to Book III, pp. 427 ff.

1—6. A solemn introduction, describing the Advent of Jehovah to judge His people. Of old He appeared at Sinai in the midst of lightnings and storm to give the Law: now He comes forth from Zion with the same tokens of power and majesty to enforce it.

1. . *The mighty God*, even *the* LORD] **El Elohim Jehovah.** The three names, representing three aspects of the Divine character, are combined to emphasise the majesty of Him with Whom Israel has to do. *El* represents Him as the Mighty One; *Elōhīm* perhaps (the original meaning is doubtful) as the Awful One in Whom are united all manifold excellences of Deity; *Jehovah* as the Self-revealing One. *Elōhīm* is His name as the God of nature and creation: *Jehovah* as the God of the covenant and of grace. The same threefold combination is found, twice repeated, in Josh. xxii. 22, in the solemn asseveration by the trans-Jordanic tribes of their innocence of any wrong motive in

From the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.
2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty,
God hath shined.
3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence:
A fire shall devour before him,
And it shall be very tempestuous round about him.

erecting the altar of Witness. It occurs nowhere else in exactly the same form, but similar combinations are found. See Gen. xxxiii. 20; xlvi. 3, "El, the God of thy father"; Deut. iv. 31, "Jehovah thy God (*Elohim*) is a merciful God" (*El*); v. 9, "I Jehovah thy God (*Elohim*) am a jealous God" (*El*); and similarly vi. 15; vii. 9, "Jehovah thy God, he is God (*Elohim*); the faithful God" (*El*).

It is noteworthy that two other names of God occur in this Ps. He is called 'the Most High' (*Elyōn*), as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe (*v.* 14), cp. vii. 17; xviii. 13; and see Appendix, Note ii. In *v.* 22, *Elōah*, the singular of *Elōhim*, is used. This form is found frequently in Job; in Deut. xxxii. 15, 17; Is. xliv. 8; Hab. i. 11, iii. 3; and in a few other passages; but elsewhere in the Psalter only in xviii. 31; cxiv. 7; cxxxix. 19.

The rendering *The God of gods, the* LORD (Jehovah), is not probable, though its adoption by the LXX has given it a wide currency.

hath spoken] In the summons which the next line describes. He breaks the silence which has been misunderstood to mean indifference (*v.* 21) by proclaiming a great assize.

and called the earth] The earth in all its length and breadth, with all its inhabitants, is summoned to be the witness of the trial.

2. *Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty*] This rendering is certainly preferable to that of P.B.V., 'Out of Zion hath God appeared in perfect beauty." Cp. xlviii. 2; and Lam. ii. 15, which unites phrases taken from both Psalms. In 1 Macc. ii. 12 the Temple is called "our beauty and our glory." Zion is now the abode of Jehovah, where He sits enthroned upon the cherubim (lxxx. 1). From thence, as of old from Sinai, He **hath shined forth** (R.V.): a word specially used of that dazzling blaze of light which is the symbol of God's Presence. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 2; Ps. lxxx. 1; xciv. 1.

3. In the preceding verses the Theophany is described as already visibly beginning. Instead of simply continuing that description, the poet-seer "imagines himself as an eager and interested spectator," and prays God to come near and declare His will:

Let our God come, and not keep silence!
Fire devoureth before him,
And round about him it is very tempestuous.

See Driver, *Hebrew Tenses*, § 58; and for similar constructions cp. xli. 2 (note); Is. ii. 9.

Lightnings and storm are the outward symbols which express the awfulness of God's coming to judgement. He is 'a consuming fire' (Deut. iv. 24; ix. 3; Hebr. xii. 29) devouring His enemies; an irresist-

He shall call to the heavens from above, 4
And to the earth, that *he* may judge his people.
Gather my saints together unto me; 5
Those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

ible whirlwind (lviii. 9), sweeping them away like chaff (i. 4; Is. xxix. 5). Cp. Ex. xix. 16, 18; Is. xxix. 6; Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; xcvii. 2 ff.

4. *He shall call to the heavens from above*] Better, in continuation of the preceding verse, **Let him call to the heavens above.** The object of the summons is 'that he may judge his people.' Heaven and earth, the whole world of nature, are summoned to be witnesses of the judgement, for they are far older than man, and have watched the whole course of Israel's history. Cp. Deut. iv. 26, 32; xxxi. 28; xxxii. 1; Isa. i. 2; Mic. i. 2; vi. 1, 2. The poetical idea finds a strange equivalent in the conception of modern science that every action is recorded by a corresponding physical change, so that Nature is in truth a witness to the actions of man[1].

5. *Gather* &c.] To whom is the command addressed? Perhaps to the angels who are God's ministers of judgement (Matt. xxiv. 31), and by whom He appears attended (Deut. xxxiii. 2); less probably to heaven and earth, which according to the analogy of the parallel passages, are summoned as witnesses. But perhaps no definite reference at all is intended, and no particular messengers are in the Psalmist's mind (cp. Is. xiii. 2).

my saints] The word *chāsīd* denotes those who are the objects of Jehovah's *chesed* or lovingkindness. 'Saint,' like 'servant,' as applied to Israel, expresses the relation in which Jehovah has placed the nation towards Himself, without necessarily implying that its character corresponds to its calling (lxxix. 2; Is. xlii. 19). The indictment against many of the Israelites is that their conduct towards their fellow-men is entirely destitute of that 'lovingkindness' which ought to reflect the lovingkindness of Jehovah towards them. On the word *chāsīd* see Appendix, Note i.

those that have made &c.] Or, **those that make** &c. The reference is not merely to the original ratification of the covenant with the nation at Sinai (Ex. xxiv. 5 ff.), but to the recognition and maintenance of it by each fresh generation with repeated sacrifices. The previous line refers (in the word 'saints') to the divine grace which is the originating cause of the covenant with Israel, this line to the human act which acknowledges that grace and the obligations which it entails. It has been thought strange that the Ps. which depreciates sacrifice should recognise it as the sanction of the covenant, and it has been suggested that these words are merely 'ironical.' It is however impossible to regard them as merely ironical. Though the Decalogue contained no command to offer sacrifice, the primitive institution of sacrifice was sanctioned and regulated by the Book of the Covenant (Ex. xx. 24 ff).

[1] See Babbage, *Ninth Bridgewater Treatise*, ch. IX., "On the Permanent Impression of our Words and Actions on the Globe we inhabit."

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness:
For God *is* judge himself. Selah.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak;
O Israel, and I will testify against thee:
I *am* God, *even* thy God.
8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices
Or thy burnt offerings, *to have been* continually before me.
9 I will take no bullock out of thy house,

Sacrifice had its divinely appointed place in the economy of the old Covenant, though not that which formal and hypocritical worshippers imagined. It could not be a substitute for devotion and morality; but its abuse did not abrogate its use. See Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 201.

6. Better (unless we alter the vocalisation and render, *and let the heavens declare*),

And the heavens declare his righteousness,
For God is about to judge.

While the defendants are being gathered, the Psalmist hears the heavens, which have been summoned to witness the trial, solemnly proclaiming the justice of the Judge, as a guarantee of the impartiality of His judgement. This explanation is supported by the use of the perfect tense in xcvii. 6, a passage which is obviously based upon this Psalm.

7—15. The trial begins. God is the accuser as well as the judge. Israel's sacrifices are unexceptionable, but it is not slain beasts which the Lord of all the earth desires, but the devotion of the heart, exhibited in thanksgiving and trust. The people as a whole are addressed. The duty which is enforced is their duty towards God, corresponding to the first Table of the Decalogue.

7. *I will testify against thee*] Or, **I will protest unto thee**, of solemn warning and exhortation. Cp. lxxxi. 8, another Asaphite Psalm.

I am *God*, even *thy God*] The words which stand at the head of the Decalogue, with *God* substituted for *Jehovah* by the Elohistic editor of the Psalm. Cp. lxxxi. 10, where *Jehovah* is retained. They express the relation of Jehovah to Israel, upon which was founded His right to give them a law, and now to call them to account for their neglect of it.

8. Render with R.V.,

I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices;
And thy burnt offerings are continually before me.

This rendering is grammatically preferable to that of R.V. marg. *Nor for thy burnt offerings, which are* &c., which gives substantially the same sense. God's indictment does not relate to sacrifice: the stated offerings are duly presented. *Continually* seems to allude to the 'continual burnt offering,' which was offered daily, morning and evening. See Num. xxviii. 3 ff.

9 ff. The owner of the vast herds of animals which roam the forests and range over a thousand mountains is not like some earthly king who

Nor he goats out of thy folds.
For every beast of the forest *is* mine, 10
And the cattle upon a thousand hills.
I know all the fowls of the mountains: 11
And the wild beasts of the field *are* mine.
If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: 12
For the world *is* mine, and the fulness thereof.
Will I eat the flesh of bulls, 13
Or drink the blood of goats?
Offer unto God thanksgiving; 14
And pay thy vows unto the most High:
And call upon me in the day of trouble: 15

comes and takes the choicest of his subjects' possessions at his will (1 Sam. viii. 16 f.). The phrase rendered *upon a thousand hills* may mean *upon the mountains where thousands are*. The construction in either case is peculiar, and it has been conjectured that we should read *upon the mountains of God*, as in xxxvi. 6; but the alteration is hardly necessary.

11. *The wild beasts of the field*] A peculiar phrase, found only in another Asaphite Psalm (lxxx. 13), meaning probably **all that moveth in the field,** including the 'creeping thing' (Gen. i. 24 f).

are *mine*] Lit., *are with me*, i.e. *are in my sight* (P.B.V.), or, *in my mind* (R.V. marg.).

12 f. If God had need of sustenance, He would not be dependent upon man for it: but a spiritual Being needs no material support.

12. *the world* is *mine* &c.] Cp. xxiv. 1; lxxxix. 11; Ex. xix. 5; Deut. x. 14; Job xli. 11; 1 Cor. x. 26.

13. Such a gross and material notion of sacrifice was common in heathen countries, and the survival of the phrase 'bread' or 'food of Jehovah' seems to indicate that it once existed even in Israel. See Lev. iii. 11; xxi. 6, 8, 17, 21; &c. See Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 207.

14, 15. What sacrifice then does God desire? Not the material sacrifices of the altar, but the offering of the heart.

14. *Offer* &c.] Lit., *sacrifice unto God thanksgiving*: hence R.V., **offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving.** The context makes it clear that spiritual sacrifices of thanksgiving are meant, not the material 'sacrifices of thanksgiving' (Lev. vii. 12) as contrasted with burnt offerings. Cp. lxix. 30 f; li. 17; Hos. xiv. 2.

and pay &c.] i.e., by such spiritual sacrifice thou shalt discharge thy vows (Lev. vii. 16). Cp. lxi. 8.

15. *call upon me* &c.] Prayer is the proof of trust. Cp. Ps. xx. 1; yet note that that Psalm contains a reference to the acceptableness of material sacrifice (*v.* 3).

I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

16 But unto the wicked God saith,
What hast thou to do to declare my statutes,
Or *that* thou shouldst take my covenant in thy mouth?
17 Seeing thou hatest instruction,
And castest my words behind thee.
18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him,
And hast been partaker with adulterers.

The LXX. here inserts a *Selah*, which would appropriately mark the close of this division of the Ps. Cp. *v.* 6.

16—21. In the preceding verses God has reproved the formalist:—the man who regarded the offering of sacrifice as the essence of religion. He now turns to address the wicked man:—the hypocrite, who repeated His commandments and professed allegiance to Him, while he deliberately set those commandments at defiance by his conduct. To him God adopts a sterner tone. The offences with which he is charged are breaches of the commandments of the second Table of the Decalogue, neglect of the simplest moral duties toward his neighbour. The general reproof in *vv.* 16, 17 is followed by specific charges of breaking the eighth, seventh, and ninth commandments, and the address concludes with a stern warning, *v.* 21. Comp. generally Hos. iv. 1, 2; Rom. ii. 17—24.

16. What meanest thou by rehearsing my statutes, and by having taken (R.V. rightly, **and that thou hast taken**) my covenant in thy mouth? The people had pledged themselves to observe the conditions of the covenant as laid down in the 'book of the covenant,' of which the Decalogue ('the tables of the covenant') was the first and most important part (Ex. xxiv. 7), and these men professed to recognise their duty as Israelites. Cp. Is. xxix. 13; Matt. xv. 8.

17. *instruction*] Or, *correction*; the whole discipline of moral education; a word occurring here only in the Psalter, but common in Proverbs, where it is the mark of the fool and the scorner to despise instruction. Cp. Deut. viii. 5; xi. 2.

and castest &c.] Lit., **and hast cast**, flung them away out of sight and got rid of them. Contrast David's behaviour, xviii. 22. *My words* includes all God's commandments, but points especially to the 'ten words' of the Decalogue (Deut. iv. 13; cp. Ex. xx. 1).

18. *then thou consentedst with him*] The original is stronger: **thou didst delight thyself with him**, didst gladly associate with him. Cf. Job xxxiv. 9. R.V. omits *then*. The LXX vocalises the consonants differently and renders, *thou didst run along with him* (cp. Prov. i. 16): but the Massoretic reading is preferable.

and hast been partaker &c.] Lit., *and thy portion was with adulterers:* thou didst make common cause with them, condoning and sharing their sin.

Thou givest thy mouth to evil,
And thy tongue frameth deceit.
Thou sittest *and* speakest against thy brother; 20
Thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
These *things* hast thou done, and I kept silence; 21
Thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such a one* as thyself:
But I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.
Now consider this, ye that forget God, 22
Lest I tear *you* in pieces, and *there be* none to deliver.

19. Thou hast let loose thy mouth for evil,
And thy tongue contriveth deceit.

Giving way to unbridled speech, evil in substance and mischievous in aim: contriving a whole structure of deliberate falsehoods.

20. *Thou sittest* emphasises the deliberateness of the slander. Cp. "the session of scorners," i. 1. *Thy brother* might mean any Israelite; but the alternative *thine own mother's son* (cf. lxix. 8, note) in the parallel line indicates that it is to be understood literally. The Psalmist describes a state of moral degeneracy in which even the closest ties of kinship are ignored. Cp. Mic. vii. 6; Jer. ix. 4.

thou slanderest] Lit. *dost allege a fault against.* This rendering suits the parallelism, but the phrase (which occurs here only) is of uncertain meaning, and may mean *givest a thrust against* (R.V. marg.), or, *settest a stumbling block for.*

21. When thou didst these things, and I kept silence, refraining from immediate condemnation of thy conduct by condign punishment, thou didst mistake longsuffering for indifference, and think that I cared as little as thyself for the laws of morality.

that I was] This rendering hardly represents the original, which means *that I should be* or *prove myself.* It is the same word **Ehyeh**, *I am*, or *I will be*, which is found in Ex. iii. 14, in God's proclamation of Himself as the Self-revealing One, '*I will be that I will be.*' The wicked man degrades his conception of God into a reflection of himself, and fancies that Jehovah as He reveals Himself will prove to be only like a man.

set them *in order*] All the offences of which thou art guilty. The word is a forensic term, used of drawing up the various counts of an indictment. Cp. Job xxiii. 4; xxxiii. 5.

22, 23. Practical conclusion, addressed to both classes: to the formal worshippers who 'forget God' by ignoring the spiritual character of the worship which He desires, as well as to the hypocrites whose conduct proves that they "refuse to have Him in their knowledge."

22. *ye that forget God*] *Elōah:* see note on *v.* 1. For the phrase cp. ix. 17; Job viii. 13; and for the thought, x. 4.

lest I tear &c.] Like a lion. Cp. Hos. v. 14.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me:
And to him that ordereth *his* conversation *aright*
Will I shew the salvation of God.

23. *Whoso offereth praise*] **He that offereth the sacrifice of thanksgiving,** as in *v.* 14. This line sums up the teaching of *vv.* 7—15 on the nature of true worship: and it is natural to expect the second line to sum up the teaching of *vv.* 16—21 on the obligations of moral duty. This it does if the rendering of A.V. can be retained, '*to him that ordereth* his *conversation* aright,' i.e. takes heed to his way of life, or orders it in accordance with My commandments. But *aright* is not in the Heb., and it is doubtful if this sense can fairly be extracted from the text. Hence the rendering of R.V. marg. has been proposed, *and prepareth a way that I may shew him* &c., which is grammatically unexceptionable, but does not fit the context. Probably some slight correction of the text is needed, such as, *He that keepeth my way* (xviii. 21; xxxvii. 34), or, *my words* (*v.* 17; cxix. 17, 101), *to him will I shew the salvation of God.* Cp. xci. 16.

PSALM LI.

This Psalm is the first of eighteen Psalms bearing the name of David, which appear to have been taken from some earlier collection by the compiler of the Elohistic Psalter. Eight of them have titles connecting them with historical incidents in the life of David. Most recent commentators find the contents of these Psalms unsuitable to the occasions indicated, and regard the titles as arbitrarily prefixed by the compiler. In some instances this appears to be the case; but it may be doubted whether we are always capable of judging what might or might not have been considered appropriate to a particular occasion. Some of these Psalms may be original Davidic Psalms, altered perhaps in the process of transmission, or adapted for liturgical use by modifications and additions. Others may have been selected as bearing, more or less, upon the events with which they are connected. Others again may have been composed with the intention of illustrating episodes in the life of David. The latter view is sometimes objected to as implying a fraud which is incompatible with inspiration. But the objection rests upon a narrow view of inspiration. Why may not God have used and directed the faculty of poetic imagination, in order to enable us better to understand some particular incident, and more fully to realise the lessons contained in it?

In studying these Psalms it must be remembered that they have a history. The possibility that they no longer lie before us in their original form must be taken into account. Other changes beside the substitution of *Elohim* for *Jehovah* may have been made by the editor, or may have crept in by accident in the process of transmission. This is

not mere theory. We see what has actually happened in the case of Ps. liii.

Ps. li is assigned by its title to that crisis in David's life when Nathan awoke his slumbering conscience to recognise his guilt in the matter of Bath-sheba (2 Sam. xii). It is then a commentary upon David's confession, "I have sinned against Jehovah," and Nathan's assurance, "Jehovah also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die." It has generally been thought to contain David's first heart-felt prayer for pardon, while Ps. xxxii, written after some interval, when he had had time to ponder upon the past, records his experience for the warning and instruction of others, in accordance with the resolution of li. 13.

Its general appropriateness cannot be denied. Where, save in a character like that of David, uniting the strongest contrasts, capable of the highest virtue and the lowest fall, could we find such a combination of the deepest guilt with the most profound penitence? David had been endowed with the spirit of Jehovah (1 Sam. xvi. 13; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2); he had received the promise that his house should be established for ever before Jehovah (2 Sam. vii. 15, 16). Might he not well fear lest the fate of Saul should be his fate; lest, like Saul, he should be deprived of the spirit of God and deposed from his high position of privilege? But it was just this capacity for repentance and trust in the abundance of God's mercy which distinguished him from Saul, and made it possible for him with all his faults to be called "the man after God's own heart." Comp. the well-known passage in Carlyle's *Heroes*, p. 43.

The Davidic authorship of the Psalm has however been denied by many critics, chiefly upon the following grounds.

(1) The last two verses imply that Jerusalem was in ruins and that sacrificial worship was suspended. If these verses were part of the original Psalm, they would certainly point to a date in the Exile or in some period of distress such as that which preceded the mission of Nehemiah. It has indeed been maintained that they can be understood as a prayer of David that the still unfinished fortifications of Jerusalem (cp. 1 Kings iii. 1) may be carried to a successful completion; or, in figurative language, that his kingdom may not suffer for his sin. But the explanation is unsatisfactory. A comparison of similar expressions in lxix. 35; cii. 16; cxlvii. 2, makes it almost certain that the words are a prayer for the restoration of Jerusalem and the reestablishment of sacrificial worship there. These verses however do not appear to be an original part of the Psalm. It is indeed argued that "the omission of these verses makes the Psalm end abruptly": but the abruptness, if it exists, is far less startling than the termination of a Psalm of such surpassing spirituality with the hope of the restoration of material sacrifices. *v.* 17 forms a conclusion which, if abrupt, is in harmony with the spirit of the Psalm: *v.* 19 does not. In fact the contrast, if not actual contradiction, between *v.* 19 and *vv.* 16, 17 makes it difficult to suppose that they can have been written by the same poet at the same time. Moreover while *vv.* 1—17 are, at least in expression, strictly individual, *v.* 19 introduces the people generally ("they shall offer"). These verses then must be excluded in the consideration of the date of the Psalm, as in all probability a later addition.

(2) But further it is urged that the words of *v.* 4, "against thee, thee only, have I sinned," are inapplicable to David's situation, for "however great David's sin against God, he had done Uriah the most burning wrong that could be imagined; and an injury to a neighbour is in the O.T. a 'sin' against him, Gen. xx. 9; Jud. xi. 27; Jer. xxxvii. 18" (Driver, *Introd. to Lit. of O. T.* p. 367). But surely it is a mistake to demand logical accuracy in words of intense emotion. What is meant is that "the other aspects of his deed—its heinous criminality as a wrong done to a fellow-man—disappeared for the time, while he contemplated it as a sin against his infinitely gracious Benefactor." (Kay.) Moreover if the words are inapplicable to David, to whom can they apply? The Psalmist confesses himself blood-guilty (*v.* 14), and whether the expression refers to actual murder or only to 'mortal sins,' it must refer in the main to offences against man not God. See Ezek. xviii. 10—13.

(3) Of more weight against the Davidic authorship is the consideration that the closest parallels of thought and language are to be found in the later chapters of Isaiah, in particular in the national confession of guilt in Is. lxiii. 7—lxiv, and that the language appears to belong to a later and more developed stage of the religious consciousness. Cp. *v.* 1 with Is. lxiii. 7; *v.* 3 with Is. lix. 12; *v.* 9 with Is. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; *v.* 11 *b* with Is. lxiii. 10, 11; *v.* 17 with Is. lvii. 15; lxi. 1; lxvi. 2. The precariousness of this argument is obvious, and the weight attached to it will depend largely upon the view taken of the whole course of the growth of religious ideas in Israel, but it cannot be disregarded.

It must then be taken into account as at least a possibility that the Psalm was written by some deeply devout prophet of the Exile, perhaps even the author of the later chapters of Isaiah, and placed in the mouth of David, to illustrate an episode in his life which presented the most signal instance in history of the fall, repentance, and pardon, of a good and great man: written by inspiration of God to supply to all ages the most profound type of confession, and the most comforting assurance, based upon the experience of David, that God's mercy to the penitent knows no limit.

By many critics the Psalm is regarded as the utterance not of an individual but of the *nation*. This view is as old as Theodore of Mopsuestia (A.D. 428) who refers it to Israel in Babylon, confessing its sins and praying for forgiveness and restoration from exile, and it has recently been maintained by Robertson Smith (*O. T. in Jewish Church*, 2nd ed., p. 440) and Driver (*Introd.* p. 367), who place it in the Exile, and by Cheyne (*Origin of the Psalter*, p. 162; *Aids to the Devout Study of Criticism*, pp. 164 ff.), who places it later, between the Restoration and Nehemiah. "The situation of the Psalm," writes Robertson Smith, "does not necessarily presuppose such a case as David's. It is equally applicable to the prophet, labouring under a deep sense that he has discharged his calling inadequately and may have the guilt of lost lives upon his head (Ezek. xxxiii), or to collective Israel in the Captivity, when, according to the prophets, it was the guilt of blood equally with the guilt of idolatry that removed God's favour from His land (Jer. vii. 6; Hos. iv. 2, vi. 8; Is. iv. 4). Nay, from the Old Testament point of view, in which the experience of wrath and forgiveness stands generally

in such immediate relation to Jehovah's actual dealings with the nation, the whole thought of the Psalm is most simply understood as a prayer for the restoration and sanctification of Israel in the mouth of a prophet of the Exile...perhaps of the very prophet who wrote the last chapters of the Book of Isaiah."

Such a view will not appear impossible to anyone who compares the personification of Israel as the Servant of Jehovah in Is. xl. ff; and the addition of *vv.* 18, 19 points to the use of the Psalm by Israel in exile as the fitting expression of its feelings. But it is difficult to resist the impression that the Psalm is personal rather than national in its original and primary intention.

Its authorship and date and original intention are however questions of minor importance, compared with its profound appropriateness as the voice of the penitent soul in all ages. One generation after another has found by experience that its words "fit into every fold of the human heart," and supply them with language which the revelation of the Gospel has not superseded, but only deepened in meaning. If any proof of its inspiration is needed, it is to be found here (Rom. viii. 26). In true repentance, says Luther, a knowledge of sin and a knowledge of grace must combine: it is this double knowledge which inspires this Psalm, and is revealed in a clearer light in Jesus Christ.

A strange testimony to its power is given in the story that Voltaire began to parody it, but when he reached *v.* 10 was so overcome with alarm that he desisted from his profane attempt.

It is the fourth of the seven Psalms known from ancient times in the Christian Church as the 'Penitential Psalms' (vi, xxxii, xxxviii, li, cii, cxxx, cxliii). According to some Jewish rituals it is recited on the Day of Atonement; and it is appointed for use in the Commination Service on Ash Wednesday.

There is no clearly marked strophical arrangement in the Psalm, but (*vv.* 18, 19 being regarded as an addition outside the scheme of the Ps.) it falls into four stanzas, each, with the exception of the fourth, consisting of two pairs of verses.

i. The Psalmist prays for pardon and cleansing, confessing the greatness of his sins (1—4).

ii. In utter self-abasement he contrasts the corruption of his nature with the sincerity which God desires, and expresses his confident assurance that God can and will cleanse and gladden him (5—8).

iii. Repeating his petition for pardon, he supplicates for inward renewal and for the continuance of God's favour and support (9—12).

iv. He resolves to employ his regained freedom in grateful service, and to express his thanksgiving by that sacrifice of the heart which God most desires (13—17).

v. A prayer of the congregation in exile that Jerusalem may be rebuilt and the sacrificial worship reestablished, as a visible proof of the restoration of God's favour (18, 19).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came unto him, after he had gone in to Bath-sheba.

51 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-
kindness:
According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot
out my transgressions.
2 Wash me throughly from mine iniquity,
And cleanse me from my sin.

1—4. Prayer for forgiveness and cleansing: its ground, God's grace; its condition, man's repentance.

1. *Have mercy upon me*] Or, **Be gracious unto me**, as the word is rendered in 2 Sam. xii. 22. It suggests the free bestowal of favour rather than the exercise of forgiving clemency, and is connected with the word rendered *gracious* in Ex. xxxiv. 6. Cp. Ps. iv. 1; lvi. 1; lvii. 1.

thy lovingkindness] The origin and the bond of the covenant between Jehovah and Israel.

according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies] Or, **according to the abundance of thy compassions**. Cp. xxv. 6; Is. lxiii. 7; Lam. iii. 32; 1 Pet. i. 3.

The prayer for pardon is thus based upon God's revelation of His character as "a God full of compassion and gracious, abundant in lovingkindness and truth; keeping lovingkindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty" (Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7);—a passage which seems to have supplied the Psalmist's language. Cp. lxxxvi. 15; Joel ii. 13.

Sin is described, as in Ex. xxxiv. 7 (cp. Ps. xxxii. 1, 2), in three different aspects, as *transgression*, *iniquity*, *sin:* the Heb. words thus rendered meaning respectively, (1) defection from God or rebellion against Him: (2) the perversion of right, depravity of conduct: (3) error, wandering from the right way, missing the mark in life.

The removal of guilt is also triply described. (1) *Blot out* (cp. *v.* 9): sin is regarded as a debt recorded in God's book which needs to be erased and cancelled (cp. the use of the word in Ex. xxxii. 32; Num. v. 23; and see note on Ps. xxxii. 2): or the word may be used more generally (*wipe out*) of cleansing away defilement so that no trace of it remains (2 Kings xxi. 13). Cp. the promise in Is. xliii. 25; xliv. 22; and also Neh. iv. 5; Jer. xviii. 23. (2) *Wash me:* the word means properly to wash clothes, as a fuller does (LXX correctly, πλῦνον, cp. Rev. vii. 14; xxii. 14), and is frequently used of ceremonial purifications (Ex. xix. 10, 14, &c.): here it denotes that inward cleansing of which external washings were the type. Cp. Jer. ii. 32; iv. 14. He prays, 'wash me *thoroughly*,' or, *abundantly*, for "the depth of his guilt demands an unwonted and special grace." But if transgressions abound (Lam. i. 5), so does mercy. (3) *Cleanse me* (cp. *be clean*, *v.* 7); like *wash*, a common term in the Levitical ritual, especially in the laws concerning leprosy, meaning sometimes *to cleanse*, sometimes *to pronounce clean*. This use

For I acknowledge my transgressions: 3
And my sin *is* ever before me.
Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, 4
And done *this* evil in thy sight:
That thou mightest be justified when thou speakest,
And be clear when thou judgest.

of it suggests the comparison of sin with leprosy. Cp. Lev. xiii. 6, 34, &c.; 2 Kings v. 10, 12, 13, 14.

3. *For I acknowledge*] Lit., *I know*. The pronoun is emphatic. His sins have all along been known to God. They are before His eyes (xc. 8). But now he has come to know them himself; they are unceasingly present to his conscience. Such consciousness of sin is the first step towards the repentance and confession which are the indispensable conditions of forgiveness. David refused to acknowledge his sin to himself and to God—yet not, apparently, without sharp pangs of remorse, see xxxii. 3, 4—until Nathan's message awoke his conscience. Cp. the confession of the nation in Is. lix. 12.

4. David's confession to Nathan was couched in the simple words (two only in the Heb.), "I have sinned against Jehovah." The additional words "thee only" have been taken as a proof that the Psalm cannot have been written by David. But they need not, as we have seen already, be pressed with such extreme logical precision as to exclude sin against man. All sin, even that by which man is most grievously injured, is, in its ultimate nature, sin against God, as a breach of His holy law; just as man's duty to his fellow-man is based upon his duty to God and is regarded as part of it. Moreover the king, as Jehovah's representative, was in an especial and peculiar way responsible to Him.

and done this *evil*] Better as R.V., **and done that which is evil in thy sight.** Cp. 2 Sam. xi. 27, "the thing that David had done was evil in the sight of Jehovah": and xii. 9, "Wherefore hast thou despised the word of Jehovah, to do that which is evil in his sight?"

that thou mightest &c.] Better, **that thou mayest be justified when thou givest sentence**: i.e., that Thy righteousness and holiness may be declared and vindicated when Thou dost pronounce sentence on my sin. *When thou speakest* is shewn by the parallelism to mean, 'when Thou dost pronounce sentence.' *Be justified* corresponds to the cardinal divine attribute of righteousness: *be clear* to that of holiness. Cp. Is. v. 16, "God the Holy One proves Himself holy in righteousness."

But this is a hard saying. Can it be meant that the vindication of God's holiness is the object of man's sin? (1) Grammar forbids us to relieve the difficulty by rendering *so that thou art justified* (consequence) instead of *in order that thou mayest be justified* (purpose). (2) We might regard *that* as depending upon *vv.* 3, 4 *a* taken together, and introducing the object of the Psalmist's confession. 'I confess my sin, that thou mayest be justified in pronouncing sentence upon me.'

5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity;

The sinner's confession and self-condemnation is a justification of God's sentence upon sin, just as, conversely, the sinner's self-justification is a challenge and impugnment of God's justice (Josh. vii. 19; Job xl. 8; 1 John i. 10). (3) Probably however we are meant to understand that man's sin brings out into a clearer light the justice and holiness of God, Who pronounces sentence upon it. The Psalmist flings himself at the footstool of the Divine Justice. The consequence of his sin, and therefore in a sense its purpose (for nothing is independent of the sovereign Will of God), is to enhance before men the justice and holiness of God, the absolutely Righteous and Pure. "The Biblical writers...drew no sharp accurate line between events as the consequence of the Divine order, and events as following from the Divine purpose. To them all was ordained and designed of God. Even sin itself in all its manifestations, though the whole guilt of it rested with man, did not flow uncontrolled, but only in channels hewn for it by God, and to subserve His purposes....We must not expect that the Hebrew mind...altogether averse from philosophical speculation, should have exactly defined for itself the distinction between an action viewed as the *consequence*, and the same action viewed as the *end*, of another action. The mind which holds the simple fundamental truth that all is of God, may also hold, almost as a matter of course, that all is *designed* of God" (Bishop Perowne). In this connexion passages such as 2 Sam. xxiv. 1; Is. vi. 10, lxiii. 17; Jud. ix. 23; 1 Sam. xvi. 14, xviii. 10, xix. 9; 1 Kings xxii. 21, require careful consideration.

Such a view is obviously liable to misconstruction, as though, if sin is in any sense treated as part of the divine purpose, and redounding to God's glory, it must cease to be sinful, and there must be an end of human responsibility. But the O.T. firmly maintains the truth of man's responsibility: and St Paul, in applying the words of this verse to the course of Israel's history (Rom. iii. 4) rebuts as the suggestion of an unhealthy conscience the notion that God is responsible for sin which He overrules to His glory.

The quotation in Rom. iii. 4 is from the LXX, in which the Heb. word for *be clear* is taken in its Aramaic sense, *be victorious, prevail*, and the last word (*when thou judgest*) is ambiguously rendered. The Greek word may be passive, *when thou art judged* (as P.B.V., derived from LXX through the Vulg., and A.V. in Rom.), i.e. when Thy justice is challenged: but more probably it is middle, 'when Thou comest into judgement.' So R.V. in Rom. Cp. Jer. ii. 9 (LXX); Matt. v. 40.

5—8. He has inherited a sinful nature; and yet, so he is confident, God can and will make it conform to His desire. The emphatic 'Behold!' marks the beginning of a new stanza.

5. *Behold, I was shapen*] Better, **Behold, I was born.** Acts of sin have their root in the inherited sinfulness of mankind. It does not appear, as some have thought, that the Psalmist pleads the sinfulness of his nature as an excuse for his actual sins. Rather, in utter self-abasement, he feels compelled to confess and bewail not only his actual sins,

And in sin did my mother conceive me.
Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: 6
And in the hidden *part* thou shalt make me to know wisdom.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: 7
Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.

but the deep infection of his whole nature (Job xiv. 4; Rom. vii. 18). Moreover this verse forms the introduction to *v.* 6, which, as the repetition of 'behold' indicates (cp. Is. lv. 4 f; liv. 15 f), stands in close connexion and correlation with it. He contrasts his natural perversity and liability to error with the inward truth and wisdom which God desires, and which, he is confident, God can communicate to the pardoned and regenerate soul.

6. *truth in the inward parts*] In the most secret springs of thought and will, unseen by man but known to God, He desires *truth*, perfect sincerity, whole-hearted devotion, incapable of deluding self, as David had done, or deceiving man, as he had endeavoured to do by his attempts to cover his sin and its consequences, or dissembling with God, as in his infatuation he had imagined to be possible. Correlative to the *truth* which God desires is *wisdom*, which is His gift, the spiritual discernment which is synonymous with the fear of Jehovah, and is the practical principle of right conduct. Cp. Prov. i. 7, ix. 10; Job xxviii. 28; James iii. 17.

7, 8. The verbs in these verses may be regarded as optatives (*mayest thou purge me*), but it is preferable to render them as futures: **Thou shalt purge me...thou shalt wash me...thou shalt make me hear.** They thus give utterance to the Psalmist's faith that God can and will cleanse and restore him. In *vv.* 9 ff direct prayer is resumed by the imperative, as in *vv.* 1, 2.

The figurative language is borrowed from the ceremonial of the law. A bunch of hyssop, some common herb which grew upon walls (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 455), was used as a sprinkler, especially in the rites for cleansing the leper and purifying the unclean. (Ex. xii. 22; Lev. xiv. 4 ff; Num. xix. 6 ff, 18 ff; Hebr. ix. 19.) Washing of the person and clothes regularly formed part of the rites of purification. The Psalmist is of course thinking of the inward and spiritual cleansing of which those outward rites were the symbol. He appeals to God Himself to perform the office of the priest and cleanse him from his defilement.

whiter than snow] Cp. Is. i. 18, where this natural emblem of purity is contrasted with the scarlet of sin, suggested by the stains of blood upon the hands (*v.* 15). Terms usually applied to garments (*v.* 2 note) are transferred to the person. Cp. Rev. iii. 4, 5, iv. 4; &c.

It is unnecessary to follow the Syr. in reading *thou shalt satisfy me with joy* (xc. 14) for *thou shalt make me hear joy*, though the change would be a simple one. The language is still borrowed from the law.

8 Make me to hear joy and gladness;
That the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice.
9 Hide thy face from my sins,
And blot out all mine iniquities.
10 Create in me a clean heart, O God;
And renew a right spirit within me.
11 Cast me not away from thy presence;
And take not thy holy Spirit from me.

As the purification of the unclean was the prelude to his readmission to the gladness of the worship of the sanctuary (xlii. 4), so the cleansing of the Psalmist's heart will be the prelude to his restoration to that 'joy of God's salvation' (*v.* 12), which he desires.

the bones which *thou hast broken*] For the sense of God's displeasure had as it were crushed and shattered his whole frame. See note on xlii. 10, and cp. xxxii. 3.

9—12. Repeated prayer for pardon, cleansing, and renewal. The change from the future to the imperative (see above) indicates that a fresh division of the Ps. begins here.

9. *Hide thy face from my sins*] Cease to gaze upon them in displeasure. Cp. xxxii. 1; xc. 8. This use of the expression is unusual. Generally God is said to hide His face when He withdraws His favour (xiii. 1; xliv. 24, &c.).

blot out] See note on *v.* 1.

10. *Create in me*] Rather, **Create me**, i.e. for me. The word is used of the creative operation of God, bringing into being what did not exist before: and so in the parallel line *renew* should be rather **make new** (Vulg. *innova* better than Jer. *renova*). It is not the restoration of what was there before that he desires, but a radical change of heart and spirit. *A right spirit* should rather be **a stedfast** or **constant spirit** (lvii. 7; lxxviii. 37; cxii. 7), fixed and resolute in its allegiance to God, unmoved by the assaults of temptation. Such a clean heart and stedfast spirit, the condition of fellowship with God (Matt. v. 8), the spring of a holy life, can only come from the creative, life-giving power of God. Cp. the prophetic promises in Jer. xxiv. 7; xxxi. 33; xxxii. 39; Ezek. xi. 19; xviii. 31; xxxvi. 26; and see 2 Cor. v. 17; Gal. vi. 15; Eph. ii. 10; iv. 24.

11. The upright "behold God's face" (xi. 7): He admits them to His presence for ever (xli. 12). The spirit of Jehovah came upon David, as it departed from Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 13, 14). Did David fear that he might share the fate of Saul, banished from God's presence and deprived of His favour, deserted by that Spirit which is the source of all right desire and action?

It is pointed out by the advocates of the national interpretation of the Psalm that the phrase of the first line is always used of the rejection of the nation and its banishment from the holy land (2 Kings xiii. 23; xvii. 20; xxiv. 20; Jer. vii. 15): and that the phrase 'God's holy spirit' is

Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation;
And uphold me *with thy* free spirit.
Then will I teach transgressors thy ways;
And sinners shall be converted unto thee.
Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation:
And my tongue shall sing aloud of thy righteousness.

found elsewhere in the O.T. only in Is. lxiii. 10, 11, where it is mentioned (along with 'the angel of His presence' *v.* 9) as the mediator of His presence in the midst of the nation of Israel. But both phrases are equally applicable to the individual.

Although the doctrine of the personality of the Holy Spirit is not taught in the O.T., passages like these, which imply that in the spirit Jehovah personally acts, prepare the way for the N.T. revelation concerning Him, and can be used in the fullest Christian sense. See Oehler's *O.T. Theol.*, § 65.

12. *Restore* &c.] For sin has destroyed that assurance of God's help which is ever a ground of rejoicing (ix. 14; xiii. 5; xx. 5; xxxv. 9). He prays for that deliverance which he is confident (*v.* 8) that God can and will grant him.

with thy *free spirit*] Rather, **with a free**, or, **willing spirit.** Cp. Exod. xxxv. 5, 22; and the cognate word in liv. 6, 'a *freewill* offering.' He desires to be upheld from falling by such a divine inspiration as will move him spontaneously to think and do such things as are right. His first impulse will be to shew forth his thankfulness in acts (*v.* 13).

13—17. Resolutions of thanksgiving.

13. Having experienced the joy of penitence and restoration, he will endeavour to instruct transgressors in the ways of Jehovah in which they have refused to walk (Is. xlii. 24), those commandments which they have refused to keep, so that they may return to Him from Whom they have gone astray. Ps. xxxii has been thought to be the fulfilment of this resolution. This resolve is however, it is said, "little appropriate to David, whose natural and right feeling in connexion with his great sin must rather have been that of silent humiliation than of an instant desire to preach his forgiveness to other sinners." But surely an endeavour to undo the evil effects of a sin whereby he "had given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme" would be one of the most fitting fruits of repentance.

14. *Deliver me from bloodguiltiness*] From the power and the punishment of my sin. Cf. xxxix. 8; xl. 12. No doubt 'bloodguiltiness' may include all 'mortal sin,' for which death was the punishment (see Ezek. xviii. 13; Ps. ix. 12, note); and the word is applicable enough to the nation which is repeatedly charged with the crime of murder (Is. i. 15; iv. 4; Jer. xix. 4; Ezek. vii. 23; 2 Kings xxiv. 3, 4; &c.); but it is distinctly appropriate to David's crimes of adultery and murder. Cp. 2 Sam. xii. 5, 13.

thy righteousness] God's righteousness, i.e. His faithfulness to His

15 O Lord, open thou my lips;
And my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.
16 For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give *it:*
Thou delightest not in burnt offering.
17 The sacrifices of God *are* a broken spirit:
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.

18 Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion:
Build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

character and covenant, is exhibited in the pardon of the penitent not less than in the judgement of the impenitent. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John i. 9). Contrast Rom. ii. 4 ff.

15. *open thou*] Lit. as P.B.V., *thou shalt open*, i.e. when thou openest. Not the occasion for praise only, but the power to praise aright is the gift of God. Cp. xl. 3. In this verse and the preceding one there may be an allusion to the public worship of God. Cp. xxvi. 6, 7. He may be tacitly comparing himself to the leper who has been pronounced clean, and restored to that fellowship with the congregation from which he had been excluded.

16. *For thou desirest not sacrifice*] R.V., **For thou delightest not in sacrifice.** The verb is the same as in *vv.* 6, 19, and xl. 6. *For* gives the reason for the nature of the thank-offering which he proposes to offer:—not material sacrifice which God does not desire, but the sacrifice of a contrite heart. Cp. xl. 6, the sacrifice of obedience; l. 14, 23; the sacrifice of thanksgiving.

thou delightest not] R.V., **thou hast no pleasure**: a word used of accepting a sacrifice (cxix. 108; cp. xix. 14). For the sense in which God is said to have no pleasure in sacrifice, see Introd. to Ps. l. An absolute repudiation of all sacrificial worship cannot be intended.

17. *The sacrifices of God*] Such as He desires and approves.

A broken spirit and *a contrite heart* are those in which sorrow and affliction (*v.* 8) have done their work, and the obstinacy of pride has been replaced by the humility of penitence. Cp. xxxiv. 18; Is. lvii. 15.

The P.B.V. *a troubled spirit* follows the Vulg. *spiritus contribulatus*, but introduces a distinction which does not exist in the Heb.

thou wilt not despise] Though David had despised the word of the LORD (2 Sam. xii. 9), he is confident that God will not despise him. Cp. cii. 17; John vi. 37.

18, 19. Prayer of Israel in exile for the restoration of Jerusalem and the renewal of the Temple worship.

Reasons have already been given for thinking that these verses are not part of the original Psalm, but an addition by the exiles who adapted it to their own needs.

18. Cp. cii. 13 ff.

Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteous- 19
ness, with burnt offering and whole *burnt offering:*
Then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar.

19. *Then shalt thou be pleased with*] R.V., **Then shalt thou delight in**, as in *v.* 16.

the sacrifices of righteousness] Those offered in a right spirit. Cp. iv. 5; Deut. xxxiii. 19.

with burnt offering and whole burnt offering] R.V., **in burnt offering** &c. The term *ōlāh*, 'burnt-offering,' denotes the sacrifice as 'ascending' in smoke and flame: *kālīl*, 'whole burnt offering,' denotes the sacrifice as entirely consumed. It was the rule that the burnt offering should be wholly consumed, to symbolise the entire self-dedication of the worshipper; and the second designation is added in order to emphasise this idea of the sacrifice. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 10; 1 Sam. vii. 9.

This anticipation of the restoration of material sacrifices in Jerusalem seems a poor ending to a Psalm of such profound spirituality. But a material Temple and visible sacrifices still had their work to do in forming a centre for the Jewish Church and serving as a visible sign of God's covenant with His people. Not until Christ had come and offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, could they be finally dispensed with, and the full truth of such words as those of this Psalm be understood.

PSALM LII.

The title prefixed to this Psalm ascribes it to David, and connects it with the occasion when Doeg informed Saul that David had been received by Ahimelech at Nob, and assisted with the means for his flight (1 Sam. xxi, xxii). The character denounced in the Psalm is in some respects such as we may suppose Doeg to have been. He was a man of wealth and importance as the chief of Saul's herdmen (or, according to the LXX, the keeper of his mules). His tongue was "a deceitful tongue," because although the facts he reported were true, he helped to confirm Saul in a false and cruel suspicion. It "devised destruction" and "loved all devouring words," for his story was told with malicious intent and fatal result. Just sufficient appropriateness may be traced to account for the title having been prefixed by the compiler of this division of the Psalter, or for the Psalm having been connected with the story of Doeg in some historical work from which the compiler took it.

But the entire absence of any reference to the cold-blooded and sacrilegious murder of the priests at Nob, in which Doeg acted as Saul's agent, when all his other officers shrank from executing his brutal order, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to suppose that the Psalm was really written by David on that occasion, unless we could assume that it was composed after Doeg's information was given but before the massacre was perpetrated, which is wholly improbable.

To judge from its contents, the Psalm is a denunciation of some wealthy and powerful noble, who had been guilty of ruining innocent persons by malicious slanders or false evidence. As reference is made to his wealth (*v.* 7), and his wrongdoing is contrasted with the loving-kindness of God, it seems probable that he was one of those magnates so frequently denounced by the prophets, who, in defiance of their duty of lovingkindness to their neighbours, enriched themselves by impoverishing the poor, and did not scruple to ruin their victims by the use of false evidence and the subservience of venal judges. See for example, Mic. ii. 1 ff; iii. 1 ff; vi. 12; vii. 3. The Psalmist speaks as the representative of the sufferers, who will rejoice at their oppressor's fall as a proof of God's righteous judgement.

As to the particular occasion and date of the Psalm little can be said. The evils to which it refers were rife in the eighth century, but they had existed before and continued to exist after. A couple of parallels in Jeremiah (*vv.* 1, 8) are insufficient to establish its dependence upon that book. Its author may have been a prophet. His tone of authority and vigorous denunciation of evil in high places recall Isaiah's denunciation of Shebna (Is. xxii. 15 ff), and, in a less degree, Jeremiah's denunciation of Pashhur (xx. 3 ff), and Hananiah (xxviii. 5 ff). Evidently it is directed against some conspicuous individual, and is not merely a general denunciation.

The Psalm falls into two divisions.

i. The unscrupulous evil-doer is called to account; his character is described; and his fate foretold (1—5).

ii. With awe the righteous contemplate his fall, and rejoice over the judgement of this self-confident braggart: while the Psalmist contrasts his own security under the protection of God, and makes vows of public thanksgiving (6—9).

To the chief Musician, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.

52 Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty *man?*

On the title, **For the chief Musician, Maschil of David**, see *Introd.* pp. xviii f. It is the first of four 'Maschil' Psalms.

1—5. Denunciation of the evil-doer and prediction of his fate.

1. This verse states the theme of the Psalm; the contrast between man's wrongdoing and God's lovingkindness. The two halves of the verse correspond to the two divisions of the Psalm. The statement of the second line is abruptly introduced, but it is virtually the answer to the question of the first. What avails it thee to boast of successful evil-doing (x. 3)? it is vain: **the lovingkindness of God (endureth) all the day**; that covenant love in which the Psalmist trusts (*v.* 8), and of which all His 'saints' (*v.* 9) are the object.

O mighty man] Perhaps simply, as P.B.V., *thou tyrant*, for power

The goodness of God *endureth* continually.
Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; 2
Like a sharp rasor, working deceitfully.
Thou lovest evil more than good; 3
And lying rather than to speak righteousness. Selah.
Thou lovest all devouring words, 4
O thou deceitful tongue.
God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, 5

soon degenerates into tyranny: but rather perhaps with sarcastic irony, *thou hero!* Cp. Is. v. 22; Jer. ix. 3.

God] *El*, 'the strong one' (cp. l. 1), is significantly used here. The braggart tyrant thinks himself strong, but there is a stronger than he, who will call him to account.

2. *Thy tongue deviseth*] Cp. xxxv. 20. Sins of the tongue—falsehood, slander, false witness, and the like—are frequently denounced in the Psalms and by the Prophets. See v. 9; x. 7; xii. 2 ff; Mic. vi. 12; Jer. ix. 3; &c.

mischiefs] R.V., **very wickedness** (as in v. 9); or *destruction*, perhaps not without a reminiscence of the original meaning of the word, *a yawning gulf*, for his tongue is ready to swallow up (*v.* 4) the righteous. The plur. denotes mischief or destructiveness of every kind.

like a sharp rasor] Lit., *like a whetted rasor*, which cuts you before you are aware, as you handle it incautiously. The tongue and its words are elsewhere compared to swords and spears and arrows (lv. 21, lvii. 4, lix. 7, lxiv. 3; cp. Prov. xxvi. 18). Comp. Shakespeare, *Cymbeline*, iii. 4,

"'Tis slander,
Whose edge is sharper than the sword."

working deceitfully] The partic. cannot, unless we assume a laxity of construction, be in agreement with *thy tongue;* nor can it well be referred to the *sharp rasor*. It is best to take it as a vocative, **O thou worker of deceit.** Cp. ci. 7.

3. *evil more than good*] Evil rather than good, evil and not good. The meaning is not merely that he has a preference for evil, but that he chooses evil instead of good, like the nobles censured in Mic. iii. 2, "who hate the good and love the evil."

righteousness] Not merely truth, but truth regarded as promoting and securing justice. The aim and result of his falsehoods was injustice.

4. *devouring words*] Lit., *words of swallowing up.* Cp. the use of the verb in xxxv. 25, "We have swallowed him up": and liii. 4.

O thou deceitful tongue] This rendering is certainly preferable to that of the margin, 'and *the deceitful tongue*.' The bold identification of the offender with the offending member is far more vigorous, and perfectly legitimate. Cp. cxx. 2, 3; xii. 3; 1 Kings xix. 18.

5. *likewise*] We might have expected *therefore*, as P. B. V. following Vulg. loosely renders: but *likewise* is significant. There is a corre-

He shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of *thy* dwelling place,
And root thee out of the land of the living. Selah.
6 The righteous also shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him:

spondence and equivalence between the sin and its punishment. Cp. Mic. ii. 1—10, where the idea is worked out that the heartless oppressors who have driven the poor from their homes will be driven from the land into exile.

The doom of the wicked man is forcibly described by various figures. He fancies himself securely intrenched in the fortress of his wealth, but God will *break him down* (Jud. viii. 9) and that *for ever*, so that there will be no restoration of the ruins. He is at ease in his home, but God will take him as a man takes a coal from the hearth with tongs or shovel, and plucking him out of his dwelling, drive him forth as a homeless wanderer (Deut. xxviii. 63; Prov. ii. 22; Job xviii. 14, R.V.). He is "spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil" (xxxvii. 35), but God will uproot him out of the land of the living. Cp. for the phrase Jer. xi. 19; and note the contrast between the fate of the wicked and the future of the Psalmist (*v.* 8).

The verbs in this verse might be rendered as in the LXX, as a prayer, "May God destroy thee" &c.; but the rendering in the future is preferable. Sentence is pronounced in a tone of prophetic authority. Cp. Is. xxii. 17 ff.

Selah marks the conclusion of the first part of the Psalm.

6—9. The sight of his fall inspires the righteous with awe, and gives occasion for rejoicing at this proof of God's just government of the world, for trustful hope, and grateful thanksgiving.

6, 7. And the righteous shall see, and fear,
And shall laugh at him, (saying),
Lo, &c.

The first impression produced by the sight is that of *fear;* not alarm, but awe; a deeper reverence for God and His government of the world: the next impression that of scorn and derision (ii. 4) for the braggart who trusted in his wealth. Such rejoicing is no mere vindictive triumph at the wicked man's ruin. Malicious satisfaction at the calamity of the wicked is condemned in the O.T.; see Job xxxi. 29; Prov. xxiv. 17. But inasmuch as the judgement of the wicked is an illustration and proof of the government of God, it must be welcomed with joy by the righteous. Cp. Rev. xviii. 20; xix. 1 ff. It must be remembered moreover that the apparently unchecked prosperity of the wicked was a sore trial of faith to those whose view of God's working was limited to this world. They naturally and rightly desired a vindication of His righteousness, and rejoiced when they saw it. See further *Introd.* pp. lxx ff, and cp. lviii. 10 f; lxiv. 7 ff; v. 11, note.

Lo, *this is* the man *that* made not God his strength; 7
But trusted in the abundance of his riches,
And strengthened himself in his wickedness.
But I *am* like a green olive tree in the house of God: 8
I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever.
I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done *it:* 9
And I will wait on thy name; for *it is* good before thy saints.

7. The words of the righteous. There is a touch of sarcasm in the use of the word *geber* (akin to *gibbor*, *v.* 1) for *man* (as perhaps in Is. xxii. 17, see R.V. marg.), denoting a man in his full vigour.

that *made not God his strength*] Or, *stronghold.* The tense implies that it was the constant habit of his mind.

but trusted &c.] Cp. xlix. 6.

in his wickedness] The singular of the word rendered *mischiefs* (R.V. *very wickedness*) in *v.* 2. It may here mean *greed*, or *covetousness.* But the rendering of the Targ. and the Syr. *in his wealth* (whence A.V. marg. *substance*), seems to represent a slightly different reading, which agrees well with the parallel, *in the abundance of his riches.*

8. *But I* am *like a green olive tree*] R.V., **But as for me, I am like a green olive tree,** rightly emphasising the contrast between the fate of the wicked man and the hopes of the speaker. But who is the speaker? Is it, as is commonly supposed, the Psalmist? or is the speech of the righteous in *v.* 7 continued, but with a transition to the singular, in order more forcibly to express the personal faith of each individual? It makes little difference to the sense: the Psalmist, if he is the speaker, speaks as the representative of the righteous.

like a green olive tree in the house of God] It is possible (cp. xcii. 13) that trees grew in the temple courts, as they grow at the present day in the Haram area, and that he compares his prosperity and security to that of the carefully tended trees planted in sacred ground. But more probably two figures are combined. He is like an evergreen olive tree, while the wicked man is rooted up: he is God's guest, enjoying His favour and protection. For the metaphor of the tree cp. Jer. xi. 16; Hos. xiv. 8 (of the nation); Ps. i. 3; xcii. 12 ff: and for that of the guest see xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; xv. 1. Note too that God's house may mean the land of Israel (Hos. ix. 15), in which the righteous dwells securely while the wicked man is driven out of it (*v.* 5).

mercy] Rather, **lovingkindness**, as in *v.* 1.

9. *I will praise thee*] R.V., **I will give thee thanks**, "the sacrifice of thanksgiving," l. 23.

because thou hast done it] For this emphatic absolute use of the verb cp. xxii. 31; xxxvii. 5.

I will wait &c.] R.V., **I will wait on thy name, for it is good, in the presence of thy saints.** Cp. Is. xxvi. 8. But 'in the presence of thy saints' implies some *public* act of praise (cp. xxii. 25; liv. 6); and it is probable that for *wait* some word meaning *proclaim* should

be read, thus: **I will proclaim that thy name is good, in the presence of thy saints.** God's *chasīdīm*, 'saints' or 'beloved ones,' are those who are the object of His *chĕsĕd* or lovingkindness. Cp. l. 5; and Appendix, Note i.

PSALM LIII.

This Psalm is another recension of Ps. xiv. *Elōhīm* (God), is substituted for *Jehovah* (A.V. LORD) in accordance with the usage of this book; and in *vv.* 1—4, 6 there are a few variations which hardly affect the sense; but *v.* 5 differs widely from the corresponding *vv.* 5, 6 of Ps. xiv. It is a disputed question whether this difference is due to corruption of the text or to intentional change. On the one hand the curious similarity of the Hebrew letters is in favour of the view that the text here is a conjectural restoration of characters which had become partially obliterated: but on the other hand it is possible that some later editor intentionally altered the original text in order to adapt the Psalm to his purpose by introducing a fresh historical reference, probably, as we shall see, to the destruction of Sennacherib's army.

At first sight *v.* 6 seems to bring the date of the Psalm down to the Exile. It might be a liturgical addition made in the time of the Exile, but even if this is not the case (and the occurrence of the verse in both recensions points to its being an original part of the Psalm) its language, as will be shewn in the notes, is not decisive.

The Psalmist traces the deep and universal corruption of mankind to its source in their failure to seek after God (1—3). He illustrates this corruption by the cruel treatment to which 'the people of Jehovah' have been subjected; and points to some signal interposition by which Jehovah has proved His care for them and refuted the denial of His Providence (4, 5). The Psalm concludes with a prayer that He will gladden Israel with a full deliverance (*v.* 6).

It is commonly supposed that the Psalmist is describing the depravity of his own age and his own country. But at least in *vv.* 1—3 it is of mankind at large (*the sons of men*, *v.* 2) that he is speaking. His words recall the great examples of corruption in the primeval world, in the days before the Flood, at Babel, in Sodom; and in this recension at any rate, it is clear that 'my people' in *v.* 4 must mean the nation of Israel, and not the poor but godly folk within the nation, while the 'workers of iniquity' must mean foreign invaders, not tyrannical Israelite magnates, for *v.* 5 can refer to nothing less than some great national deliverance from a foreign enemy. In the notes on Ps. xiv the view is taken that *vv.* 4, 5 were originally meant to refer to the oppression of Israel in Egypt and the deliverance at the Red Sea, as a great typical instance of defiant antagonism to Jehovah and of His intervention on behalf of His people; and they seem to have been remodelled here to introduce a reference to the invasion of Judah by the Assyrians and the miraculous destruction of Sennacherib's host.

To the chief Musician upon Mahalath, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. 53
Corrupt are they, and have done abominable iniquity:
There is none that doeth good.
God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, 2
To see if there were *any* that did understand, that did seek God.

The title runs: **For the chief Musician: set to Mahalath. Maschil of David.** *Mahalath* (cp. the title of Ps. lxxxviii) may mean *sickness*, and is best explained as the initial word of some well-known song, to the melody of which the Psalm was set; rather than as denoting a mournful style of music or some kind of instrument. The LXX could only transliterate the word as unintelligible.

1—3. The universal depravity of mankind, and its cause.

1. *The fool*] A class of men, not a particular individual. The word *nābāl* here used for fool denotes moral perversity, not mere ignorance or weakness of reason. 'Folly' is the opposite of 'wisdom' in its highest sense. It may be predicated of forgetfulness of God or impious opposition to His will (Deut. xxxii. 6, 21; Job ii. 10; xlii. 8; Ps. lxxiv. 18, 22): of gross offences against morality (2 Sam. xiii. 12, 13): of sacrilege (Josh. vii. 15): of ungenerous churlishness (1 Sam. xxv. 25). For a description of the 'fool' in his 'folly' see Is. xxxii. 5, 6 (A.V. *vile person, villany*).

hath said in his heart] Or, **said.** This was the deliberate conclusion of men, upon which they acted. Cp. x. 6, 11, 13.

There is *no God*] Cp. x. 4. This is not to be understood of a speculative denial of the existence of God; but of a practical denial of His moral government. It is rightly paraphrased by the Targum on xiv. 1, 'There is no government of God in the earth.' Cp. lxxiii. 11; Jer. v. 12; Zeph. i. 12; Rom. i. 28 ff.

Corrupt are they &c.] Render, **They did corrupt and abominable iniquity; there was none doing good.** The subject of the sentence is mankind in general. Abandoning a practical belief in God, they depraved their nature, and gave themselves up to practices which God abhors (v. 6). 'Corrupt' describes the self-degradation of their better nature; 'abominable' the character of their conduct in the sight of God. Such was the condition of the world before the Flood. See Gen. vi. 11, 12; and with the last line of the verse cp. Gen. vi. 5. Rom. i. 18—32 is a commentary on this verse. Men "refused to have God in their knowledge"..."their senseless heart was darkened"... "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." For *iniquity* Ps. xiv reads *doings*.

2. For a while God as it were overlooked the growing corruption. At length He 'looked down' (xxxiii. 13, 14). So in the yet simpler language of the Pentateuch He is said to have 'come down to see' the wickedness of Babel and Sodom (Gen. xi. 5; xviii. 21; and note the

3 Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy;
There is none that doeth good, no, not one.
4 Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?
Who eat up my people *as* they eat bread:
They have not called upon God.

use of 'look down' in the latter narrative though in a different connexion, xviii. 16). Were not these typical examples of human corruption in the Psalmist's mind? God (in xiv. 2 Jehovah) looked down... to see if there were any that did understand (or *deal wisely*, R.V. marg., for the verb often includes the idea of right action), **that did seek after God.** Cp. ix. 10. The use of *God*, not *Jehovah*, in Ps. xiv as well as here, is significant. It is of mankind in general, not of Israel, that the Psalmist is speaking. God made Himself known through the voice of conscience and in the works of creation, but men would not follow the light of conscience or read the book of nature. See Acts xiv. 17; xvii. 27; and especially Rom. i. 19 ff.

3. The result of His investigation. **Every one of them had gone back** (xliv. 18) from following God (in xiv. 3 *turned aside* from the path of right): **together had they become tainted**, a word which in Arabic means *to go bad* or *turn sour*, but in Heb. is used only in a moral sense, here and in Job xv. 16. On the interpolation in the P.B.V. of Ps. xiv after *v.* 3 see note there.

4, 5. The corruption of mankind exemplified in their treatment of God's people; and His Providence demonstrated in the deliverance of them.

4. God is the speaker. The first clause may be taken as in A.V., 'Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge?' Are they so ignorant that they cannot distinguish between right and wrong? Cp. *v.* 2, and lxxxii. 5. But a much better connexion with *v.* 5 is gained by rendering, *Have not the workers of iniquity been made to know?* i.e. taught by sharp experience to recognise their error. Then *v.* 5 follows as an answer to the question, pointing to the plain white with the bones of Jerusalem's besiegers. For this pregnant sense of *know* cp. Hos. ix. 7; Jud. viii. 16 (*taught*, lit. *made to know*).

who eat up &c.] The A.V. follows the Ancient Versions in understanding this to mean, 'they devour my people as naturally as they take their daily food.' And this they do without regard to God (in Ps. xiv, Jehovah). Cp. for the phrase, Num. xiv. 9, "the people of the land are bread for us"; Num. xxiv. 8; and for the fact, Is. i. 7; Jer. x. 25; xxx. 16; Hab. iii. 14; Ps. lxxix. 7. The reference to national deliverance in the following verse excludes (at any rate in this recension of the Ps.) the explanation of 'my people' as the godly few in Israel (Mic. ii. 9; iii. 3, 5, and often in the prophets), and of 'the workers of iniquity' as the nobles who impoverished them by unjust extortions (Mic. iii. 1 ff; Is. iii. 14 f; Prov. xxx. 14).

There were they in great fear, *where* no fear was: 5
For God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth *against* thee:
Thou hast put *them* to shame, because God hath despised them.

O that the salvation of Israel *were come* out of Zion! 6
When God bringeth back the captivity of his people,
Jacob shall rejoice, *and* Israel shall be glad.

5. *There* points to some signal instance in which panic terror and overwhelming calamity overtook the 'workers of iniquity' who came to devour the people of God. They were seized with a supernaturally inspired terror, where there was no natural cause for panic. Cp. 1 Sam. xiv. 15; 2 Kings vii. 6; xix. 7, 35.

for God hath scattered &c.] The bones of Israel's enemies lie bleaching on the plain, where their bodies were left unburied (Ezek. vi. 5). This cannot be an anticipation of some further defeat. It must rather be an allusion to some historic event; and it at once suggests the annihilation of Sennacherib's great army. Probably the text was intentionally altered in this recension in order to introduce a reference to the most famous example in later times of the discomfiture of worldly arrogance venturing to measure its strength with Jehovah.

against *thee*] The people of God are addressed.

thou hast put them *to shame*] Cp. 2 Kings xix. 20 ff.

hath despised them] R.V. *rejected them*, as the word is often rendered elsewhere. But *despised* better expresses the contempt for the enemies of His people which is meant. Cp. Jud. ix. 38; Is. xxxiii. 8. In their folly they said in their heart, 'There is no God' (cp. 2 Kings xviii. 35); and this catastrophe which they are powerless to avert is His answer to their blasphemy. Cp. ii. 4, 5. For the widely different reading of xiv. 5, 6 see notes there.

6. Concluding prayer for the full restoration of Israel. Some commentators have regarded this as a liturgical addition, but its presence in both recensions is in favour of its originality. It forms an appropriate conclusion to the Ps., and the recollection of past deliverance in *v.* 5 naturally passes into a prayer for further restoration.

the salvation of Israel] Lit. *salvations*, victory and deliverance full and complete. (Ps. xiv. 7 has the singular.) Zion is Jehovah's dwelling-place, the centre from which He exercises His earthly sovereignty.

when God bringeth back &c.] Or, as R.V. marg., *returneth to the captivity* &c. For *God* Ps. xiv. 7 has *Jehovah*. At first sight these words seem to fix the date of the Psalm in the period of the Exile (cxxvi. 1). Nor does the phrase *out of Zion* exclude such a view. The exiles turned to Zion even in her desolation (Dan. vi. 10; 1 Kings viii. 44), and from thence Jehovah might be expected to restore His people. But (1) it is very probable that the phrase rendered *bring back the cap-*

tivity means rather *turn the fortunes*[1]. This meaning suits all the passages in which the phrase occurs, while *turn the captivity* does not, except in the figurative sense of *restoring prosperity*. See e.g. Job xlii. 10; Ezek. xvi. 53; Zeph. ii. 7. And (2) even if *turn the captivity* is the original meaning, the phrase is used by Amos (ix. 14) and Hosea (vi. 11) long before the Babylonian Captivity. In the time of Hezekiah the words might refer to the recent fall of the Northern Kingdom.

then shall Jacob rejoice] Properly a wish or prayer (cp. xiii. 5, 6): **let Jacob rejoice, and Israel be glad.**

PSALM LIV.

This Psalm consists of two divisions, separated by *Selah*.

i. A prayer for help in imminent peril from godless enemies (1—3).

ii. A profession of unshaken confidence that God will defend and avenge the Psalmist, with a vow of thanksgiving for the deliverance which he is well assured is in store for him (4—7).

The title refers the Psalm to the time of David's persecution by Saul. When David became aware that the men of Keilah, with selfish ingratitude, intended to surrender him to Saul, he fled with his men to the wilderness of Ziph, a district to the S.E. of Hebron. But the Ziphites "came up to Saul to Gibeah, saying, Doth not David hide himself with us in the strong holds in the wood, in the hill of Hachilah, which is on the south of the desert?" (1 Sam. xxiii. 19). Saul came down to seek David, who was in imminent peril of being surrounded and captured, when Saul was compelled to withdraw in order to repel a Philistine raid. On a subsequent occasion (unless the narrative in 1 Sam. xxvi. 1 ff is only another account of the same incident) the Ziphites repeated their treachery, and again betrayed David's hiding-place.

It is argued that this reference is excluded by the description of the Psalmist's enemies in *v.* 3 as 'strangers' and 'violent men,' terms elsewhere applied to foreign oppressors. This no doubt is the general meaning of the words; but it is difficult to say positively (see note) that they could not have been applied to Israelites. Otherwise the Psalm suits the occasion. If not written by David, it may have been placed in his mouth by some later Psalmist. But its language is so general, that no positive conclusion can be formed from its contents as to the particular circumstances under which it was composed.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David, when the Ziphims came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?

54 Save me, O God, by thy name,

The title may be rendered with R.V., **For the chief Musician; on stringed instruments. Maschil of David: when the Ziphites came and said to Saul, Doth not David hide himself with us?**

1. *by thy name*] God's name is the manifestation of His character,

[1] Lit. *turn a turning*, the word *sh'būth* being derived from *shūb* 'to turn' or 'return,' not from *shābāh*, 'to take captive.' The regular word for the Babylonian captivity is *gōlāh*, 'exile.'

And judge me by thy strength.
Hear my prayer, O God; 2
Give ear to the words of my mouth.
For strangers are risen up against me, 3
And oppressors seek after my soul:
They have not set God before them. Selah.
Behold, God *is* mine helper: 4

the sum of His revealed attributes. The Psalmist can appeal to it, for He has declared that it is His will to save those who put their trust in Him. Cp. v. 11.

judge me] Do me justice. Confident in the goodness of his cause, he is sure that if right is done him, he will be delivered. Cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 15; Ps. vii. 8; ix. 4; xxvi. 1; xxxv. 24; xliii. 1.

by thy strength] R.V., **in thy might**. God has not only the will, but the power to deliver His servant. He is "a mighty one who will save" (Zeph. iii. 17).

3. This verse is repeated almost verbatim in Ps. lxxxvi. 14 (a mosaic constructed of fragments of other Psalms), with the change, accidental or intentional, of *strangers* into *proud*. The consonants of the Heb. words ZĀRĪM, *strangers*, and ZĒDĪM, *proud*, are almost identical, and some Heb. MSS. and the Targ. read ZĔDĪM here; but the rest of the versions support the Massoretic Text.

and oppressors &c.] Render, **and violent men have sought my life**, as in 1 Sam. xxiii. 15, "David saw that Saul was come out to seek his life." It has been argued that the terms 'strangers' and 'violent men' are inapplicable to Israelites, and prove that the title is erroneous. No doubt they are often used of foreign invaders or oppressors (Is. xxv. 2 ff; xxix. 5; Ezek. xxxi. 12; cp. Is. i. 7; Ezek. vii. 21); but 'violent men' or 'terrible ones' is not exclusively so used (Job vi. 23; Jer. xv. 21), and might well be applied to Saul and his followers; while the Ziphites might be designated 'strangers,' in view of their unneighbourly behaviour. It is however possible that 'strangers' refers to the men of Keilah, whom there is some ground for regarding as Canaanites. The peculiar term 'lords' or 'owners' applied to the men of Keilah (1 Sam. xxiii. 11, 12) seems to have been specially (though not exclusively) used of Canaanites. See Josh. xxiv. 11; Judg. ix. 2 ff; and J. S. Black's note on the latter passage in the *Smaller Cambridge Bible for Schools*.

they have not set God before them] They have no regard for God's will, and no fear of His judgements. Cp. x. 4, 5; xxxvi. 1; and contrast xvi. 8; xviii. 22. Under other circumstances loyalty to Saul might have required the Ziphites to surrender David: as it was, they were simply fighting against God in making themselves the tools of Saul's blind rage, for it must have been well known that God intended David to be Saul's successor.

4—7. A confident expectation of deliverance and vow of thanksgiving.

4. *God* is *mine helper*] Taught by his past experience he can say not

The Lord *is* with them that uphold my soul.
5 He shall reward evil unto mine enemies:
Cut them off in thy truth.
6 I will freely sacrifice unto thee:
I will praise thy name, O LORD; for *it is* good.
7 For he hath delivered me out of all trouble:
And mine eye hath seen *his desire* upon mine enemies.

merely that God *will* help him, but that God *is* on his side, so that the issue cannot be doubtful.

the Lord is *with them that uphold my soul*] R.V., **is of them that uphold my soul**: perhaps better, **is the Upholder of my soul.** The expression is an idiomatic one, and "the sense is not that God is the support of the Psalmist among many others, but that He is so in a supreme degree, that He sums up in Himself the qualities of a class, viz. the class of helpers (so cxviii. 7). Comp. Judg. xi. 35, 'Alas, my daughter, thou hast bowed me down; even thou art my greatest troubler.'" (Cheyne). For *uphold* cp. iii. 5 (*sustaineth*); li. 12.

5. He shall requite the evil unto them that lie in wait for me: Destroy thou them in thy truth.

God will cause the evil which they are plotting to recoil upon their own heads: or, according to the *K'thībh* or written text (*Introd.* p. li), *The evil shall return* &c.: cp. vii. 16. *Enemies* (A.V.) is a peculiar word found only in v. 8; xxvii. 11; lvi. 2; lix. 10, meaning those who lie in wait for him, like fowlers (Jer. v. 26 R.V.), or a leopard for its prey (Hos. xiii. 7). Jerome renders it *insidiatores*.

in thy truth] For Thou canst not be false to Thy promise to deliver me.

6. *I will freely sacrifice unto thee*] Or, **With a free will I will sacrifice unto thee.** So the LXX and Jer. R.V., **with a freewill offering.** But cp. Num. xv. 3, "a burnt offering or sacrifice, to accomplish a vow, or of freewill, or in your set feasts."

I will praise thy name, O LORD] R.V., **I will give thanks unto thy name.** Cp. lii. 9. LORD, i.e. Jehovah, appears here, contrary to the general usage of the book. It may have been retained, or restored, in a familiar formula. *For it*, viz. Thy name, *is good.* Cp. lii. 9, and *v.* 1.

7. *For he hath delivered me*] Such a transition from the second person of *v.* 6 to the third person is quite possible: cp. the converse transition in *v.* 5: but the subject of the verb may be 'the Name of Jehovah.' Cp. Lev. xxiv. 11; Is. xxx. 27.

The perfect tense ('hath delivered'...'hath seen') looks back from the hour of thanksgiving upon an answered prayer. Cp. lii. 9, "because thou hast done it."

hath seen his desire] Cp. xxxvii. 34; lii. 6; lix. 10; xcii. 11; cxii. 8; cxviii. 7. Such rejoicing over the fall of enemies is not of the spirit of the Gospel. But the 'salvation' for which the Psalmist prays is a temporal deliverance, which can only be effected at the expense of the implacable enemies who are seeking his life; and it will be a vindication of

God's faithfulness and a proof of His righteous government at which he cannot but rejoice. The defeat of evil and the triumph of good presented themselves to the saints of the O.T. in this concrete form, which sometimes has a ring of personal vindictiveness about it, yet, fairly considered, is in its real motive and character elevated far above a mere thirst for revenge. See *Introd.* pp. lxx ff.

PSALM LV.

Despair, sorrow, indignation, faith, find expression by turns in this pathetic record of persecution embittered by the treachery of an intimate friend, which is a companion to Ps. xli, and should be carefully compared with it. The title ascribes it to David, and its occasion has generally been supposed to be the rebellion of Absalom and the treachery of Ahithophel, whose name the Targum introduces in *v.* 16 (A.V. 15). Much of the Psalm is sufficiently appropriate to David's circumstances to account for its having been regarded as an expression of his feelings at that bitter crisis: but a closer examination makes it difficult, if not impossible, to suppose that it was actually written by him.

There is no hint that the writer is a king whose authority is threatened by a formidable insurrection. Would David have called Ahithophel "a man mine equal", even though the king's confidential adviser was styled his 'friend' (2 Sam. xv. 37; xvi. 17)? The Psalmist appears to be still in the city and unable to escape from it, living in the very midst of his enemies, whose hostility is open and unconcealed: but it was not until after he had fled from the city that David was informed of Ahithophel's treachery (2 Sam. xv. 31); it was at Hebron, not in Jerusalem, that Absalom's conspiracy made head and broke out; David's adherents in Jerusalem were sufficiently strong to prevent any rising until Absalom's arrival, and whatever preparations for rebellion may have been made there were carefully concealed; when David resolved to flee, he had no difficulty in effecting his escape. Moreover although David's administration of justice seems to have been lax or inadequate (2 Sam. xv. 2 ff), it is difficult to believe that Jerusalem can have been such a hotbed of discord and disorder and iniquity as the Psalm describes; and still more difficult to imagine that David should use the language of this Psalm in regard to a state of things for which he was largely responsible.

With this negative conclusion we must remain content. It is impossible to determine with certainty by whom or even at what period the Psalm was written. It has been suggested that Jeremiah was the author, and that the treacherous friend of *v.* 13 was Pashhur, by whom Jeremiah was scourged for predicting the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer. xx). The circumstances which seem to form the historical background of the Psalm resemble those described in the Book of Jeremiah (cp. e.g. Jer. v, vi); similarities of language appear to connect the Psalm with Jeremiah's prophecies (cp. Jer. ix. 2 ff, and references in the notes); Pashhur, as a priest, was Jeremiah's 'equal.' There is however not the

slightest indication in the Book of Jeremiah that Pashhur had ever been the prophet's intimate friend; the similarities of thought and language fall far short of proving identity of authorship; and all that can really be said is that the circumstances of the Psalmist receive valuable illustration from the prophecies of Jeremiah. The Psalmist may have been a contemporary of Jeremiah; but he may have lived in the reign of Ahaz or Manasseh, or in some other period when a weak government allowed Jerusalem to become the prey of faction, and in the ambitions of party moral obligations were contemptuously disregarded and old ties of friendship ruthlessly ignored, while the dominant party for the time being heaped insult and injury upon their defeated rivals, and even their lives were not secure. Readers of Thucydides will recall his reflections upon the Corcyræan massacre (*Hist.* iii. 82 ff), and the history of the French Revolution will supply modern illustrations.

In a MS. of Jerome's Latin Version the Psalm bears the title, *Vox Christi adversus magnatos Judaeorum et Judam traditorem*, 'The voice of Christ against the chiefs of the Jews and the traitor Judas.' It is not indeed, any more than Ps. xli, a prediction of the treachery of Judas; but every such experience of the faithlessness of trusted friends was a foreshadowing of the experience of the Son of Man. He fathomed the depths of human baseness and cruelty and ingratitude. The experience of the righteous in former generations was 'fulfilled' in His.

The Psalm falls into three nearly equal divisions. In the first of these, despair, in the second, indignation, in the third, trust, is the dominant note. Shorter stanzas of six lines may be traced in the greater part of the Psalm, but either this scheme was not completely carried out, or it has been broken by corruption of the text.

i. The Psalmist begins with an urgent prayer that God will hear him in his distress (1—3 *a*); he describes its nature, and its effect upon him (3 *b*—5); and in language of pathetic beauty, expresses his longing to escape to some quiet refuge (6—8).

ii. Suddenly his tone changes. In vehement indignation he invokes confusion upon the counsels of his enemies, and describes the tyranny of iniquity which is supreme in the city (9—11). What makes their hostility most intolerable is that the leader of the faction was once his intimate friend (12—14). May they meet the fate they deserve (15)!

iii. In a calmer tone he expresses his confidence that God will deliver him (16—18), and judge his arrogant and godless foes (19); and as he mentions them, his mind naturally reverts to the base hypocrisy of the arch-traitor (20, 21). In conclusion he reassures himself by contemplating the contrast between Jehovah's care of the righteous and His judgement of the wicked (22, 23).

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, Maschil, *A Psalm* of David.

55 Give ear to my prayer, O God;

1—3 *a*. The Psalmist's passionate appeal to God for a hearing in his distress.

1. *Give ear* &c.] Cp. liv. 2.

And hide not thyself from my supplication.
Attend unto me, and hear me: 2
I mourn in my complaint, and make a noise;
Because of the voice of the enemy, because of the oppress- 3
ion of the wicked:
For they cast iniquity upon me, and in wrath they hate me.
My heart is sore pained within me: 4
And the terrors of death are fallen upon me.
Fearfulness and trembling are come upon me, 5
And horror hath overwhelmed me.
And I said, O that I had wings like a dove, 6
For then would I fly away, and be at rest.

hide not thyself] As the unmerciful man turns away from misfortune and suffering which he does not want to relieve (Deut xxii. 1, 3, 4; Is. lviii. 7); or as though my prayer were the prayer of a hypocrite (Is. i. 15). Cp. x. 1; Lam. iii. 56.

2. *hear me*] **Answer me.**

I mourn &c.] Render, **I am restless in my complaint, and am distracted** (R.V. **moan**). A word used in Gen. xxvii. 40 of a roving life, in Jer. ii. 31 of impatience of restraint (R.V. *break loose*), is here applied to the restlessness of a distracted mind.

3. *the voice of the enemy*] Insulting, calumniating, threatening.

oppression] A peculiar word, found here only, meaning that his enemies hem him in or crush him down. Cp. the cognate verb in Am. ii. 13.

3 *b*—**5.** He describes the nature of the persecution from which he is suffering, and its effect upon his spirits.

3 *b*. *they cast iniquity upon me*] Not, they charge me with crimes of which I am innocent: but, they hurl or roll mischief down upon me, a metaphor from the practice of rolling stones down upon an enemy. Cp. cxl. 10 (of hot coals), and similar phrases in xxi. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 14.

and in wrath &c.] **And in anger are they hostile unto me:** (R.V. **persecute me**).

4. *terrors of death*] Such terrors as the presence of Death, "the king of terrors," inspires.

5. *horror hath overwhelmed me*] The same phrase as in Ezek. vii. 18, "horror shall cover them." The word occurs besides only in Job xxi. 6; Is. xxi. 4.

6—8. He would fain escape to some solitary refuge. Cp. Jer. ix. 2.

6. Weary of his life in the cruel city, he wishes he could be like the dove which he watches winging its flight swiftly to its nest in the clefts of some inaccessible precipice, far from the haunts of men (Cant. ii. 14). The dove may be meant too as an emblem of his own timidity and innocence.

7 Lo, *then* would I wander far off,
And remain in the wilderness. Selah.
8 I would hasten my escape
From the windy storm *and* tempest.
9 Destroy, O Lord, *and* divide their tongues:
For I have seen violence and strife in the city.
10 Day and night they go about it upon the walls thereof:
Mischief also and sorrow *are* in the midst of it.
11 Wickedness *is* in the midst thereof:
Deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

7. and *remain* &c.] R.V., **I would lodge in the wilderness.** *Selah* seems to be misplaced here, and also in *v.* 19.

8. Or as R.V.,

I would haste me to a shelter
From the stormy wind and tempest,

the storms of faction and party spirit raging in the city.

9—15. The plaintive pleading of the opening verses suddenly gives way to a fierce outburst of indignation.

9—11. He prays for the confusion of his enemies' counsels, and describes the miserable condition of the city.

9. *Destroy*] Lit., *swallow up* these malicious plotters, as the earth swallowed up Korah and his crew (Num. xvi. 32). From several passages however it has been inferred that this verb also means *to confound*; and if so, *their tongue* may be the object of both verbs, and there may be a reminiscence of two passages in Genesis:—"The LORD did there *confound* the language of all the earth" (xi. 9): and "In his days was the earth *divided*" (x. 25). May confusion and division such as overtook the builders of Babel overtake them, and break up their confederacy!

10. *they go about it upon the walls thereof*] A metaphor from watchmen going their rounds on the city walls. But who are meant by *they?* Perhaps the party hostile to the Psalmist, who are ever patrolling the city, on the alert for mischief. Cp. Is. xxix. 20. But perhaps rather Violence and Strife personified. These he implies with a bitter irony are the watchmen who are now in charge of order and safety in the city. This explanation agrees well with the following lines:

Iniquity also and Mischief are in the midst of it,
Destruction is in the midst thereof:
Oppression and Deceit depart not from her streets.

11. *Wickedness*] The same word as in lii. 2; *very wickedness* or *destruction.* *deceit*] R.V. **oppression,** or, marg., *fraud.*

her streets] Lit., *broad place*: the open space inside the gates, where justice was administered and business transacted. Everywhere throughout the city, in the most public places of concourse, every form of

For *it was* not an enemy *that* reproached me; then I could 12
have borne *it:*
Neither *was it* he that hated me *that* did magnify *himself*
against me; then I would have hid myself from him:
But *it was* thou, a man mine equal, 13
My guide, and mine acquaintance.
We took sweet counsel together, 14
And walked unto the house of God in company.

evil and injustice is rampant, without check or intermission. The whole city lies at their mercy. Cp. the catalogue of vices in x. 7: "His mouth is full of cursing and *deceit* and oppression; under his tongue is *mischief* and *iniquity*."

12—14. Foremost among the Psalmist's enemies is one who had formerly been one of his most intimate and trusted friends. He interrupts the denunciation, which he resumes at *v.* 15, to relate what is the bitterest ingredient in his cup of suffering. The burning indignation of the preceding and following verses gives way for a moment to a pathetic tone of sorrowful reproach. There is no need to suppose, with some critics, that these verses are misplaced, and ought to follow or precede *vv.* 6—8. The sudden transition is most true to nature: *vv.* 9—11 describe the general situation; then for the moment the thought of the personal injury which constitutes its most poignant bitterness eclipses every other thought; and in *v.* 15 indignation against the whole mass of his enemies breaks out again.

12. Render:

For it is not an enemy that reproacheth me, then I could bear it:
Neither is it one that hated me that hath magnified himself against me, then I would hide myself from him:
But it is thou, a man mine equal,
Mine associate and my familiar friend.

For connects this stanza somewhat loosely with what precedes, giving an additional reason for the prayer of *v.* 9 in the false-hearted treachery of one who is conspicuous among them,—apparently the leader of the faction. If an open and acknowledged enemy had flung scorn at him (xlii. 10; xliv. 16; lvii. 3) in the hour of defeat and humiliation, he could bear it as one of the common ills of life (cp. 2 Sam. xvi. 10 ff): if an old hatred had animated the man who took the lead in procuring his disgrace and degradation, then he might retire into obscurity without repining. But THOU! *Et* TU, *Brute!* For *magnified himself* cp. xxxv. 26, or xli. 9 (see note).

13. *Mine equal* in rank and position; *my associate* or *companion* (as in Prov. xvi. 28, *chief friends;* Mic. vii. 5, where R.V. marg. *familiar friend* is right); my close acquaintance or familiar friend (xxxi. 11). Cp. Jer. ix. 4 f.

14. **We were wont to take sweet counsel together,**
To walk in the house of God with the throng.

15 Let death seize upon them,
And let them go down quick *into* hell:
For wickedness *is* in their dwellings, *and* among them.
16 *As for* me, I will call upon God;
And the LORD shall save me.
17 Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud:

Ours was an habitual intimacy of the closest and most sacred kind, in confidential intercourse in private, in companionship in the worship of God in public. *The throng* is the festal procession or assembly of worshippers; the "multitude keeping holyday" of xlii. 4 (where however the word for *throng* is different). The P.B.V. *as friends* follows the LXX ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ, 'in concord,' Vulg. *cum consensu*.

15. The mournful recollections of past friendships so cruelly outraged give way to a fierce invocation of vengeance, and the individual disappears behind the whole body of the Psalmist's enemies. It will be noted that he avoids any personal execration of his old friend.

Let death &c.] The consonants of the written text must be rendered, *Desolations be upon them!* but the word for *desolations* is one which only occurs in the name of a place (*Beth-jeshimoth*) and is not a natural word to apply to persons; and the marginal reading, with which all the Ancient Versions agree, should certainly be followed in its division of the consonants into two words. Render, **Let death come upon them unawares.** In this and in the next line, **Let them go down alive into Sheol,** there may be an allusion to the fate of Korah and his company of rebels (Num. xvi. 30, 33). Let them be overtaken in the midst of their villany by a sudden and premature death, which will be a visible judgement on their crimes. Cp. xxxv. 8; and cxxiv. 3; Prov. i. 12. *Quick* in A.V. regularly retains its old meaning *alive*. *Sheol* (A.V. *hell*) is not the place of torment, but the abode of the departed, the O.T. equivalent of *Hades*, by which it is rendered in the LXX. See note on vi. 5.

for wickedness &c.] **For wickedness** (lit. *evils*) **is in their dwelling, in the midst of them** (lit. *in their inward part*). Evil of every kind finds a home, not only in their dwellings, but in their hearts.

16—23. In this division of the Psalm the storm of indignation dies away, and the Psalmist's trustful confidence revives.

16—18. The Psalmist's assurance that his prayer will be answered.

16. *the LORD*] Here and in *v.* 22 the name JEHOVAH is significant. It is the covenant-God of revelation to Whom he can appeal, and under Whose protection he can rest.

17. *Evening, and morning, and at noon*] *Evening* stands first because the day began at sunset. A reference to stated hours of prayer (cp. Dan. vi. 10; Acts x. 9, 30) is hardly to be found in so natural an expression for "continuing stedfastly in prayer."

will I pray, and cry aloud] R.V., **will I complain and moan.** Cp. *v.* 2.

And he shall hear my voice.
He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle *that* 18
was against me:
For there were many with me.
God shall hear, and afflict them, 19
Even he that abideth of old. Selah.
Because they have no changes,

and he shall hear] By an idiom which cannot be translated, the Psalmist speaks of this hearing as a present fact. So in *v.* 18 he uses the 'perfect of certainty,' *He hath redeemed*, for the context makes it clear that deliverance has not actually reached him. *In peace* denotes the result: delivered me and placed me in safety.

from the battle that was *against me*] Better, with the Ancient Versions, **that they should not come nigh me.**

for there were many with me] According to this rendering the words may refer to the hosts of angels sent for his succour (2 Kings vi. 16; Ps. xxxiv. 7); but the R.V. is doubtless right in rendering, **for they were many (that strove) with me.**

19. The judgement of his enemies.

God shall hear, and afflict them] Or, *humble them.* This, which is the rendering of the Ancient Versions, is probably right. But it requires a change of the vocalisation. The text as it stands must be rendered with R.V., *God shall hear, and answer them*, meaning apparently, that God will hear their raging and answer them with judgement. But this is an unnatural form of expression. The object to the verbs 'hear' and 'answer' could hardly be other than the Psalmist or his prayer.

even he that abideth of old] Render, **He that sitteth enthroned eternally**, as Judge of the world. (Cp. "Thou most worthy Judge Eternal.") Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 27; Pss. ix. 7, 8; xxix. 10; lxxiv. 12; Hab. i. 12.

Because they have no changes] This is best taken as a relative clause, dependent on the preceding sentence. Render with R.V. (placing a comma only after *of old*),

(The men) who have no changes,
And who fear not God.

'Changes' will mean vicissitudes of fortune. God will humble these men, who, because their prosperity is unbroken, fear Him not. Cp. x. 4—6; lxxiii. 4 ff. The truth is a general one, but the Psalmist is thinking particularly of his own enemies. The P.B.V., *for they will not turn, nor fear God*, takes *changes* in the sense of *change of mind*, repentance, an interpretation adopted by some critics, but not justified by usage. The text is not free from difficulty, but the explanation given above is sufficiently probable to make it unnecessary to assume a further corruption or displacement of the text.

Selah in the middle of a sentence is quite inexplicable, and must be misplaced, as it seems to be in *v.* 7.

Therefore they fear not God.
20 He hath put forth his hands against such as be at peace
with him:
He hath broken his covenant.
21 *The words of* his mouth were smoother than butter, but war
was in his heart:
His words were softer than oil, yet *were* they drawn swords.
22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:

20, 21. Once more the Psalmist reverts to the treachery of his former friend. It is quite natural that he should do so again, abrupt as is the transition from the great mass of his enemies to the one individual who to his mind stands in the forefront of them as the typical traitor. It is unnecessary to transpose these verses to follow *vv.* 12—14, or to assume that they are a misplaced fragment of another Psalm.

20. *He hath put forth his hands*] The arch-traitor is certainly meant, not (though the Heb. idiom would allow of this explanation) each of the evildoers mentioned in *v.* 19. For the phrase cp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 9, R.V.

against such as be at peace with him] R.V., **against such as were at peace with him.** Cp. vii. 4; xli. 9 (*familiar friend*, lit. *man of my peace*); Jer. xx. 10; xxxviii. 22. The plural may merely generalise, but seems rather to indicate that the Psalmist is the representative of a party.

he hath broken his covenant] R.V., **he hath profaned his covenant:** desecrated the sacred obligations of friendship (1 Sam. xviii. 3).

21. The words of *his mouth were smoother than butter*] This rendering, though supported by some of the Ancient Versions and commended by the parallelism (*smoother than butter—softer than oil*), cannot be got out of the text as it stands. This means literally,

Smooth were the buttery words of his mouth.

But an easy emendation gives the sense, *His mouth* [LXX, *face*] *was smoother than butter. Smoothness* is the Heb. term for false and hypocritical flattery, as we speak of a 'smooth-faced' or 'smooth-tongued' rogue. Cp. v. 9; xii. 2, 3.

but war was *in his heart*] R.V., **but his heart was war.**

softer than oil] Cp. "smoother than oil" (Prov. v. 3), of flattering and delusive speeches.

drawn swords] Ready to stab their victim to the heart. Cp. lii. 2, note.

22, 23. Conclusion. The Psalmist's exhortation to himself and everyone in like case, assuring himself and them that God will uphold the righteous and judge the wicked. It has been suggested that in the liturgical use of the Psalm these verses may have been sung by a different voice, as an answer of encouragement to the Psalmist.

22. *Cast thy burden*] The word rendered *burden* is of uncertain meaning. The LXX, from which St Peter borrows (1 Pet. v. 7),

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.
But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of 23
destruction:
Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days;
But I will trust in thee.

renders *thy care*. But for this explanation there is no philological ground, and the word seems rather to mean *that which he hath given thee*, the burden of care or suffering which He hath laid upon thee to bear. *He shall sustain thee*, not necessarily removing the burden, but giving strength to bear it, upholding thee lest thou shouldest fall under its weight. Cp. xxii. 8, xxxvii. 5, and notes.

The later Greek Versions and Jerome presume a reading which differs very slightly so far as the appearance of the consonants is concerned: *Cast* [*thy burden*, or, *thy cause*] *upon Jehovah, who loveth thee*. The form of the sentence would then resemble xxii. 8. But the reading is scarcely probable.

He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved] We must either understand *moved* of final and fatal disaster, or else render, *He will not suffer the righteous to be moved for ever:* though they may be in distress for awhile, there will be an end to their suffering. For the phrase cp. x. 6; xiii. 4; xxx. 6.

23. *shalt bring them down*] Namely, the foes, who are still in the Psalmist's mind: their end is **the pit of the grave**: a premature death awaits **bloodthirsty and deceitful men**, whom God abhors (v. 6). Cp. xxxvii. 35 f; cix. 8, and many passages which speak of the penal death of the wicked.

But I &c.] **But as for me, I will trust in thee.** The same God who destroys the wicked is the object of the Psalmist's trust: and in truth the extermination of the wicked is but the converse of the reward and exaltation of the righteous: the one is the necessary preliminary to the other: and the earth, be it remembered, is the stage upon which the Psalmist expects to see the *dénouement* of the drama of life, the vindication of God's moral government of the world. See *Introd.* p. lxxiii ff.

PSALM LVI.

Trust in God in the presence of danger is the keynote of this and the following Psalm, which are intimately connected together. The danger is imminent; fear is inevitable; but faith is victorious over fear. The spirit of the Psalm is concentrated in the twice-repeated refrain (*vv.* 3, 4; 10, 11).

This Psalm and Ps. xxxiv are connected by their titles with the same period in David's life. His first visit to Gath (1 Sam. xxi. 10 ff), when he went there as a solitary fugitive, must be the occasion referred to. Finding that his life was no longer safe in Judah, he resorted to the desperate expedient of taking refuge with the enemies of his country, hoping no doubt that the Philistines would not recognise in him the stripling who slew their champion. But their suspicions were aroused:

David, in fear for his life, feigned madness, so that he might be supposed to be harmless. It is not expressly stated in 1 Samuel that the Philistines forcibly detained him, but the words "feigned himself mad *in their hands*," together with the mention of his *escape* in ch. xxii. 1, seem to imply that he was practically a prisoner.

The obscure words of the title, **set to Yonath elem rechōkim**, are paraphrased in the LXX, "For the people removed far from the sanctuary"; and in the Targum, "Concerning the congregation of Israel, which is compared to a silent dove at the time when they were far from their cities, and turned again and praised the Lord of the World." These interpretations are interesting as shewing that the Psalm was at an early date regarded as a *national* Psalm, and placed in the mouth of the suffering people. Hence the Psalmist has been regarded by some critics as "the mouthpiece of oppressed and suffering Israel." But it is a mistake to say that this is "the oldest interpretation of the Psalm." For the title, whether it rests upon an authentic tradition or is only the conjecture of the editor of this book, proves that at a still earlier time the Psalm was regarded as the expression of *personal* experience. And this is the natural account of its origin; its use as the prayer of the nation in exile was a secondary application of it. While it is impossible to affirm with certainty that it was really composed by David in Gath, it breathes the spirit of trust in God in the face of danger by which David was animated, and may be taken as an illustration of his feelings in that hour of his extremity.

The Psalm consists of two stanzas, each ending with a refrain, *vv.* 1—4, 5—11; and a concluding thanksgiving *vv.* 12, 13. In each of the principal stanzas prayers for help against enemies whose hostility is described are combined with the strongest expressions of trust in God.

In the title, **For the chief Musician; set to Yonath elem rechōkim. (A Psalm) of David; Michtam: when the Philistines took him in Gath:** the words *Yonath elem rechōkīm* mean *The silent dove of them that are afar off;* or if *ēlīm* be read for *ēlĕm* (a change of vowel-points only), *The dove of the distant terebinths.* These words, like 'The hind of the morning' in the title of Ps. xxii, are doubtless the title of some song to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung, so called either from its opening words or from its subject. The explanation which regards these words as a figurative description of the subject of the Psalm (*concerning the silent dove* &c.), the innocent sufferer David patiently enduring persecution in a foreign land, is now generally abandoned.

To the chief Musician upon Jonath-elem-rechokim, Michtam of David, when the Philistines took him in Gath.

56 Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up;

On *Michtam*, which appears in the titles of the four following Psalms also, and of Ps. xvi, see *Introd.* p. xviii.

1—4. However fiercely his enemies may assault him, he will trust in God, Who will surely be true to His promise.

1. *Be merciful*] **Be gracious:** see note on li. 1, and cp. lvii. 1.

He fighting daily oppresseth me.
Mine enemies would daily swallow *me* up:
For *they be* many that fight against me, O thou *most* High.
What time I am afraid,
I will trust in thee.
In God I will praise his word,
In God I have put my trust; I will not fear
What flesh can do unto me.

for man would swallow me up] Like a wild beast rushing upon its prey. But all the Ancient Versions render *trample upon* or *crush*, which may be right. Cp. lvii. 3. The word for *man* denotes *mortal man* as contrasted with God. Cp. ix. 19; x. 18. Will the Almighty allow weak men to triumph against His Will?

he fighting daily &c.] R.V., **all the day long he fighting oppresseth me.** See note on xlii. 9. 'All the day long' is a phrase characteristic of this Psalm, *vv.* 2, 5.

2. They that lie in wait for me would swallow me up [or, **crush me**] **all the day long:**
For many are they that fight against me haughtily.

For *they that lie in wait for me* see note on liv. 5. The word rendered *O thou most High* in A.V. is not *Elyōn*, the word usually so rendered (e.g. lvii. 2), but *mārōm*. This word is applied to God, as in Mic. vi. 6, "the high God," Ps. xcii. 8, "Thou, O LORD, art on high for evermore:" but it can hardly stand by itself as a vocative, and probably means 'with a high hand,' 'haughtily.' Cp. lxxiii. 8. 'Be thou exalted' in lvii. 5, 11 is derived from the same root. The Psalmist prays that God will prove His own supreme exaltation against these self-exalted braggarts. P.B.V. *are in hand*=are busying themselves.

3. What *time* &c.] Lit., *In the day that I am afraid.* David's sojourn in Gath is the only occasion on which he is recorded to have been afraid of man (1 Sam. xxi. 12; but cp. Ps. xviii. 4).

I will trust in thee] R.V., **I will put my trust in thee**, as in A.V. *v.* 4. *I* is emphatic; *they* trust in their own might, but *I* will trust in Thee. The preposition, which is different from that in *v.* 3, gives a delicate shade of meaning, 'I will trustfully betake myself to Thee.' "Each day of peril should be to him a discipline of faith." *Kay.*

4. *In God I will praise his word*] In God's strength, by the help of His grace, I shall be enabled to praise His words of promise (cxxx. 5). Cp. xliv. 8. This rendering is preferable to the possible alternative, *In God do I make my boast, even in his word.*

in God &c.] R.V., **In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; what can flesh do unto me?** *Flesh*, synonymous with *man* in *v.* 11, denotes man on the material side of his nature, as a frail and perishable being, contrasted with God the Eternal and Almighty. Cp. lxxviii. 39; Gen. vi. 3; Job x. 4; Is. xl. 5, 6; Jer. xvii. 5.

5 Every day they wrest my words:
All their thoughts *are* against me for evil.
6 They gather themselves together, they hide themselves,
They mark my steps,
When they wait for my soul.
7 *Shall* they escape by iniquity?
In *thine* anger cast down the people, O God.
8 Thou tellest my wanderings:
Put thou my tears into thy bottle:

5—11. The second division of the Psalm is similar to the first: a description of present distress, and prayer for help, followed by an expression of perfect confidence in God's protection.

5. From the heights of faith he returns to the urgent reality of present distress. Cp. xlii. 6.

Every day] R.V., **all the day long.**

they wrest my words] Distorting and perverting them. Calumniators endeavoured to poison Saul's mind against David, 1 Sam. xxiv. 9, cp. Ps. vii. 3 ff. But the meaning is somewhat doubtful. It may be, *they pervert my affairs*, i.e. injure my interests.

all their thoughts &c.] Cp. xli. 7.

6. *they hide themselves*] I.e., lie in wait for me; or according to the Kthībh, *set an ambush*. Cp. lix. 3; x. 8, 9.

they mark my steps] Like hunters tracking their game. "Go, I pray you," said Saul to the men of Keilah, "and know and see his place where his haunt (lit. *foot*) is" (1 Sam. xxiii. 22, 23).

when they wait &c.] R.V., **even as** (marg. *inasmuch as*) **they have waited for my soul**; have been watching their opportunity to take my life. Cp. cxix. 95.

7. Shall *they escape by iniquity?*] Or, *In spite of iniquity shall they escape?* When their conduct is so inhuman, shall they escape the judgement? Less probable is the rendering of R.V. marg. (for the thought of which cp. Is. xxviii. 15), *They think to escape by iniquity.* But the phrase is obscure, and the emendation PALLĒS for PALLĒT adopted by many critics deserves consideration: *Weigh unto them* (i.e. pay them, cp. lviii. 2) *according to their iniquity.*

in thine *anger* &c.] **In anger bring down peoples, O God:** humble them by judgement. Cp. lv. 23; Is. lxiii. 6. This prayer, it is said, is unsuitable for an individual: it must be the voice of the congregation demanding the humiliation of its proud oppressors. But here, as in vii. 6 ff., the appeal for a particular judgement is absorbed in the desire for a general judgement of the world.

8. *Thou tellest my wanderings*] Thou countest the days and adventures of my fugitive life, while I am driven from my home as a wanderer and vagabond (xxxvi. 11, note); not one of them escapes Thy notice (Job xxxi. 4; Matt. x. 30). *Tell*, as in xxii. 17, xlviii. 12, means *count.*

put thou my tears] Or, *my tears are put.*

into thy bottle] By a bold figure God is said to collect and treasure

Are they not in thy book?
When I cry *unto thee*, then shall mine enemies turn back: 9
This I know; for God *is* for me.
In God will I praise *his* word: 10
In the LORD will I praise *his* word.
In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid 11
What man can do unto me.

Thy vows *are* upon me, O God: 12
I will render praises unto thee.
For thou hast delivered my soul from death: *wilt* not *thou* 13
deliver my feet from falling,

his tears, as though they were precious wine. Kay quotes St. Bernard's saying, "Lacrimae poenitentium vinum angelorum." The 'bottle' is the skin bottle of Oriental countries, holding a considerable quantity (Josh. ix. 4, 13; 1 Sam. xvi. 20; Ps. cxix. 83). There is no reference to the use of so-called 'lachrymatories.'

are they *not in thy book?*] Or, *record*. For God's 'book of remembrance' see Mal. iii. 16. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 32; Ps. lxix. 28; cxxxix. 16. The abrupt question is characteristic of this Psalm. Cp. *vv.* 4, 13.

9. Then shall mine enemies turn back in the day when I call: This I know, that [or, for] God is on my side.

For the emphatic *then* cp. ii. 5. The certainty that God is on his side is the ground of his assurance that his enemies will be put to flight. Cp. ix. 3; cxviii. 6.

10. his *word*] The omission of the pronoun, which is found in *v.* 4, is difficult. If the text is sound, *word* must be used absolutely for the divine word of promise. Cp. Prov. xiii. 13; xvi. 20.

In the LORD will I praise his *word*] The line is repeated for emphasis with the substitution of the covenant name *Jehovah* for *God*. The two names sometimes occur together in the Elohistic Psalms (e.g. lv. 16; lviii. 6); and a refrain is not always repeated in precisely the same form. But the repetition may simply be a 'conflate reading,' the second line being either the survival or the restoration of the original text, while the first line is due to the 'Elohistic' editor.

11. In God have I put my trust, I will not be afraid; What can man do unto me? (R.V.).

'Man'='flesh' of *v.* 4. Cp. cxviii. 6, borrowed from this passage.

12, 13. Concluding vows of thanksgiving.

12. *Thy vows* &c.] Vows made to Thee. The Psalmist acknowledges his obligations. Cp. lxvi. 13; Acts xxi. 23.

praises] R.V., **thank offerings**, in addition to the votive offerings.

13. Borrowed with slight variations in cxvi. 8.

For thou hast delivered &c.] He takes his stand in the future and looks back upon deliverance granted. Cp. liv. 7.

wilt *not* thou deliver *my feet from falling*] **Yea, my feet from**

That *I* may walk before God in the light of the living?

stumbling: lit., 'hast thou *not* delivered *my feet from thrusting?*' i.e. not only saved me from death, but upheld me when the foe "*thrust* sore at me that I might fall" (cxviii. 13; cp. xxxvi. 12).

that I *may walk before God*] Not simply live in His Presence and under His protection, but serve Him acceptably. So the LXX, τοῦ εὐαρεστῆσαι ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ; cp. Heb. xi. 5, 6. Cp. Gen. xvii. 1; xxiv. 40; Ps. lxi. 8: and Gen. v. 22, 24; vi. 9.

in the light of the living] Or, **of life**. "The land of the living" (xxvii. 13; cxvi. 9) is the land of light contrasted with the darkness of the grave (Job xxxiii. 28, 30); it is illuminated by the Presence of God (xxxvi. 9), from Whom comes all that is worthy to be called happiness. What to the Psalmist was a present and temporal truth, receives for the Christian a spiritual and eternal meaning. Cp. John viii. 12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."

PSALM LVII.

This Psalm resembles the preceding Psalm in thought, language, and structure. It breathes the same lofty spirit of confidence in the presence of danger; it begins with the same cry, 'be gracious unto me,' and uses the same word (*v.* 3) to express the enemy's ferocity; it has two principal divisions, each closed with a refrain (*vv.* 5, 11). But it has also marked characteristics of its own in thought, language, and rhythm. Its tone is more triumphant; and it is distinguished by the use of the figure, common in lyrical poetry, of 'epizeuxis,' or emphatic repetition of words (*vv.* 1, 3, 7, 8).

The title attributes the Psalm to David when he was "in the cave" during his flight from Saul. It is doubtful whether the cave of Adullam (1 Sam. xxii), or the cave in the wilderness of En-gedi, on the western shore of the Dead Sea (1 Sam. xxiv), is meant. The reference to enemies caught in their own trap (*v.* 6) may perhaps point to the latter occasion. There is nothing in the Psalm (not even *v.* 9, see note), inconsistent with its Davidic authorship, but on the other hand nothing decisively in favour of it. It may have been written to illustrate this episode in David's fugitive life. This Psalm, like the preceding one, has been explained as a prayer of the suffering nation: but its language is certainly more appropriate to an individual than to the nation.

The Psalm consists of two divisions, each ending with the same refrain, an appeal to God to manifest His supreme and universal sovereignty.

i. Prayer for protection and confident anticipation of help in the midst of imminent danger (1—5).

ii. Resolution to give thanks to God for His goodness in the certain prospect that the malice of enemies will recoil upon themselves (6—11).

The Psalm is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Easter Day, partly as an appropriate thanksgiving for Christ's triumph over the powers of Death and Hell; partly because the refrain is the expression of the Messianic hope which finds its guarantee in the triumph of the Resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 24—28).

Vv. 7—11 form the first part of the composite Ps. cviii: and *v.* 10 is found again almost verbatim in xxxvi. 5. Cp. also *v.* 1 with xxxvi. 7.

The melody to which this Psalm, as well as the two following Psalms and also Ps. lxxv, was to be sung is described as *Al-tashchēth*, i.e. 'Destroy not.' Of the song which gave this title it is possible that "a trace is still preserved in Is. lxv. 8. 'When the new wine is found in the cluster,' says the prophet, 'men say, 'Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it.' These words in the Hebrew have a distinct lyric rhythm. They are the first line of one of the vintage songs so often alluded to in Scripture. And so we learn that the early religious melody of Israel had a popular origin, and was closely connected with the old joyous life of the nation." Robertson Smith, *Old Test. in the Jewish Church*, p. 209.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David, when he fled from Saul in the cave.

Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: 57
For my soul trusteth in thee:
Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge,
Until *these* calamities be overpast.
I will cry unto God most High; 2
Unto God that performeth *all things* for me.

1—5. Beset by fierce and cruel enemies, the Psalmist throws himself upon God's protection, with the confident assurance of speedy help.

1. *Be merciful unto me*] **Be gracious unto me**, as in lvi. 1.
for my soul &c.] Render:

For in thee hath my soul taken refuge,
And in the shadow of thy wings will I take refuge,
Until destruction's storm be overpast.

The distinction of tenses is significant. He has placed himself under Jehovah's protection, and in his present distress claims his rights as Jehovah's client. *The shadow of thy wings* is a beautiful metaphor from the care of the mother-bird for her young. When danger threatens, they run to her for shelter. Cp. xvii. 8; xxxvi. 7; lxi. 4; lxiii. 7; xci. 4; Ruth ii. 12; Matt. xxiii. 37.

Calamities is the same word as that rendered *mischiefs* in lii. 2, *wickedness* in lv. 11 (see notes), and the verb suggests the metaphor of a storm. Cp. Is. xxvi. 20.

2. *I will cry* &c.] **I will call unto God Most High.** Cp. lv. 16; lvi. 9. The combination *Elōhīm Elyon* occurs only here and in lxxviii. 56; it is the Elohistic equivalent of *Jehovah Elyon* (vii. 17; cp.

3 He shall send from heaven, and save me
From the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah.
God shall send forth his mercy and his truth.
4 My soul *is* among lions:
And I lie *even among* them that are set on fire, *even* the sons of men,

xlvii. 2; lxxxiii. 18; xcvii. 9). *El Elyon* occurs in lxxviii. 35 (cp. lxxiii. 11); Gen. xiv. 18 ff. The Psalmist appeals to God first as the 'Most High' (see Appendix, Note ii), a name which implies God's power to help him, as the supreme Ruler of the world; and then as *God* (El) *that performeth* all things *for me*, a title which implies His willingness to help His servant now as heretofore. Here as in cxxxviii. 8, the object of the verb is left to be supplied (cp. lii. 9). He will perform all that needs to be performed. Cp. Phil. iv. 19.

3. *He shall send from heaven*] There is no need to supply an object to the verb here. The object is introduced when the verb is repeated according to the characteristic peculiarity of this Psalm. For the meaning cp. xx. 2, and perhaps xviii. 16, though see note there.

from *the reproach* &c.] Better, **(For) he that would swallow me up** (or, *crush me*, lvi. 1, note) **hath reproached.** The object of the verb may be God, Whom the enemy blasphemes in denying His willingness to help His servant (Is. xxxvii. 23, 24); or the Psalmist, whom he taunts with being deserted by his God (xlii. 10; lv. 12). The rendering of A.V. marg., *he reproacheth him that would swallow me up*, is contrary to usage, for the word is never used of God rebuking men.

Selah here is probably misplaced, cp. lv. 19. In the LXX it follows *v.* 2.

God shall send forth &c.] God's *lovingkindness and truth* (cp. xlii. 8, xliii. 3) are almost personified as "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation." It is in virtue of the lovingkindness which is the foundation of His covenant, and of the faithfulness which is an inalienable attribute of His nature, that God will send help to His servant.

4. A difficult verse, the text of which is perhaps corrupt. Adhering to the punctuation (in the modern sense) of the Massoretic accents, we may render with R.V.,

My soul is among lions;
I lie among them that are set on fire,
Even the sons of men, &c.

i.e. virtually, as the marg., *I must lie*, an expression of despondent resignation. But the note of despair is out of harmony with the generally courageous and confident tone of the Psalm; and it is more in accordance with the usual force of the Heb. tense (the 'cohortative' or 'voluntative') to take *I will lie down* as expressive of strong resolution:

My soul is among lions;
I will lie down to rest among fiery foes,
Even the sons of men, &c.

Whose teeth *are* spears and arrows,
And their tongue a sharp sword.
Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; 5
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

They have prepared a net for my steps; 6
My soul is bowed down:

Though my life is in momentary danger from savage enemies, I will lie down to rest (cp. iv. 8) among these fiery foes, secure under God's protection. The Psalm is an evening hymn, for the Psalmist contemplates 'waking the dawn' with his praises (*v.* 8). He lies down in danger, he awakes in safety: the night of trouble ends in the dawn of deliverance.

Delitzsch, rightly understanding the words as an expression of confidence, thinks that actual wild beasts are meant, among which he feels more secure than among his deadly foes; but this is scarcely probable.

Neglecting the accents we may render somewhat differently, **With my life in my hands** (so the idiomatic apposition '*my soul, I*' may be paraphrased) **I must lie down** (or, **I will lie down**) **among lions: fiery are the sons of men** &c.; but the sense will be substantially the same. For *lions* as a metaphor for fierce and dangerous enemies cp. vii. 2: x. 9; xvii. 12.

whose teeth] The language is suggested by the comparison of his enemies to lions.

their tongue &c.] The reference may be not so much to slander, as to the blasphemy of which he speaks in *v.* 3, which pierces him to the heart. Cp. xlii. 10. See also lii. 2 note; lviii. 6; lxiv. 3; Prov. xxx. 14.

5. The thought of man's murderous hostility naturally leads up to the prayer that God will manifest Himself in majesty. From the confusions of earth the Psalmist looks up to God. Cf. xi. 4 ff.; xxxvi. 5 ff.

Be thou exalted] Or, **Exalt thyself.** Cp. xxi. 13; xlvi. 10. God *is* exalted in majesty (Is. vi. 1): what is needed is that He should *manifest* His supreme authority (Is. ii. 11 ff.) over these insolent rebels.

Though rhythmically divided, the two clauses are logically one: 'exalt Thyself in Thy glory above heaven and earth.'

6—11. Convinced that God will manifest His authority, the Psalmist sees the machinations of his enemies turning to their own defeat, and utters resolutions of joyous thanksgiving.

6. The transposition of *vv.* 5 and 6, proposed by Cheyne and others, simply ruins the sense. *v.* 6 is the fitting sequel of *v.* 5. Just as in lvi. 5 ff, he returns after the refrain to contemplate his present situation. But now Faith sees the prayer of *v.* 5 answered, and with the manifestation of God's supreme authority all opposition is subdued, nay, his foes' own schemes prove their ruin.

my soul is bowed down] Perhaps we should read with the LXX, **they**

They have digged a pit before me,
Into the midst whereof they are fallen *themselves.* Selah.
7 My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed:
I will sing and give praise.
8 Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp:
I *myself* will awake early.
9 I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people:
I will sing unto thee among the nations.

have bowed down my soul; i.e. (the perf. as in lvi. 1) they have made sure of capturing me. But it is tempting to go further and read (with Ewald), *their soul is bowed down*, thereby securing a double parallelism in the verse. Lines 1 and 3 then describe their plots: lines 2 and 4 describe how they are caught in their own trap. The metaphors are taken from the nets and pitfalls used by hunters. Cp. vii. 15; ix. 15 f.; xxxv. 7; Ezek. xix. 4; Eccl. x. 8.

into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves] Better, **they are fallen into the midst of it.**

7. *My heart is fixed*] Stedfastly resolved. Cp. li. 10; cxii. 7; Col. i. 23 (ἑδραῖος is the word used by Symmachus here). The P.B.V. has changed Coverdale's *ready* into *fixed* here, but retained it in cviii. 1, probably owing to the influence of the familiar Latin title, *Paratum cor meum*, at the beginning of that Psalm.

I will sing and give praise] **I will sing and make melody.** The latter is the verb from which *mizmōr*, 'psalm,' is derived. See *Introd.* p. xvii.

8. *Awake up*] A common summons to action. Cp. Judg. v. 12; Is. li. 9, 17; lii. 1.

my glory] So the soul is designated, either as the noblest part of man, or as the image of the divine glory. Cp. vii. 5; xvi. 9; xxx. 12.

psaltery and harp] Stringed instruments, often coupled together (xxxiii. 2; 1 Sam. x. 5; 2 Sam. vi. 5; 1 Kings x. 12; Is. v. 12).

I myself *will awake early*] Better, as R.V. marg., **I will awake the dawn.** A bold and beautiful poetical figure. The dawn is often personified (Job xli. 18; Ps. cxxxix. 9). Usually it is the dawn that awakes men: he will awake the dawn by his praises before daylight. Cp. Milton, *L'Allegro*, l. 53,

> "Oft listening how the hounds and horn
> Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn."

and Ovid, *Metam.* xi. 597,

> "Non vigil ales ibi cristati cantibus oris
> Evocat auroram."

9. I will give thanks unto thee, O Lord, among the peoples: I will make melody unto thee among the nations.

This verse at any rate, it is said, could never have been written by David, and is only really intelligible, if the Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation. But the words are not unsuitable for one who was

For thy mercy *is* great unto the heavens, 10
And thy truth unto the clouds.
Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: 11
Let thy glory *be* above all the earth.

chosen to be king over a nation which had a special calling in relation to the nations of the world. If the nations were to be brought under the sway of Israel that they might be taught to know Jehovah, it was fitting that they should hear of Jehovah's faithfulness exhibited in the deliverance of His servant. Cp. xviii. 49 (with the context); ix. 11.

10. For thy lovingkindness is great unto the heavens,
And thy truth unto the skies.

For gives the reason for *v.* 9. Mercy and truth which reach from earth to heaven demand world-wide praise. Note that it is the attributes which minister to the deliverance of God's servant (*v.* 3) which are expressly named. Sent forth for his help they have proved victorious. Almost the same words are found in xxxvi. 5. Cp. Eph. iii. 18.

11. How can the Psalmist conclude more fitly than with a repetition of this prayer, which now looks beyond his own immediate needs to that perfect and universal sovereignty of God, which is the final goal of hope (1 Cor. xv. 28; Rev. xix. 6)?

PSALM LVIII.

This Psalm begins with an indignant remonstrance with those in authority, who not only fail to administer justice equitably, but are themselves among the worst of offenders (1, 2). A description of the incurably wicked, among whom, it is implied, such men must be classed, follows (3—5), and leads up to a prayer (or perhaps an expression of confident assurance) that God will render them powerless to hurt, or utterly destroy them (6—9). The Psalm concludes with a description of the double result of the judgement: the righteous who are freed from their oppressors rejoice; and men in general acknowledge God's moral government of the world (10, 11).

The Psalm is remarkable for the vigour of its language and the boldness of its figures. It has a ring of prophetic authority, in its denunciation of wicked men in high place, and its prediction of the certainty of their downfall.

Adhering to the title, which assigns it to David, Delitzsch supposes that it refers to Absalom's rebellion. In *vv.* 1, 2 we might find an allusion to Absalom's pretended zeal for justice (2 Sam. xv. 2 ff.), while in reality he was meditating the most monstrous crimes: the language of *vv.* 3 ff. is not too severe for the graceless treachery of the son who shrank from no extremes, and coldly contemplated parricide (2 Sam. xvi, xvii. 1—4): *vv.* 6—9 might well refer to the sudden and complete collapse of the rebellion, and *vv.* 10, 11 to the rejoicing of David's sympathisers at the victory (2 Sam. xviii. 19 ff.; note the phrase, "the

LORD hath *judged* and delivered him out of the hand of his enemies"; xix. 2).

But it is inconceivable that at any point of time, before or after the outbreak of the insurrection, David could have used the language of the Psalm with reference to Absalom. Beforehand indeed (though we may draw a wrong inference from the brevity of the narrative in 2 Sam.) he seems to have been blind to what was going on: and when he knew the worst, his feelings of anxiety for the personal safety of Absalom and finally of grief at his death (2 Sam. xviii. 5, 33; xix. 4), are as unlike the severe indignation of this Psalm as anything could well be. If it refers to Absalom's rebellion, it can never have been written by David.

More probably however it belongs to some later period in the history of Israel. There is no sufficient ground for supposing that the unjust judges are foreigners, whether Babylonians, Persians, or Syrians, and that the Psalm is post-exilic. The evils complained of are precisely those against which the prophets of the regal period are constantly inveighing.

Compare generally Pss. xii, xiv, and especially lxxxii; and with the concluding verses cp. the conclusions of lxiv and cxl.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David.

58 Do ye indeed speak righteousness, O congregation?
Do ye judge uprightly, O ye sons of men?

For the title see Ps. lvii.

1, 2. An indignant remonstrance with those in authority, who, instead of condemning crime, are themselves the most guilty criminals.

1. *O congregation*] This rendering of the obscure word *ēlĕm*, adopted by the scholars of the early part of the 16th century from the learned Rabbi David Kimchi (c. 1160—1235), cannot be defended, and does not suit the context. The word *ēlĕm* occurs elsewhere only in the title of Ps. lvi, and from its derivation appears to mean *silence*.

i. Taking this meaning, we may render,

(1) as R.V., **Do ye indeed in silence speak righteousness?** The Psalmist expostulates with the judges who neglect their office. "They are *dumb* when they ought to speak, as afterwards they are said to be deaf when they ought to *hear*." (Bp Perowne). 'To speak righteousness' means 'to pronounce just sentences.' Justice and uprightness are characteristics of God's judgement (ix. 8), which ought to be reflected by all earthly judges.

(2) as R.V. marg. with substantially the same sense: **Is the righteousness ye should speak dumb?**

(3) as Kay: **Will ye indeed utter long-silent justice?** a reference, he supposes, to Absalom's profession of a desire to remedy the want of proper provision for the administration of justice, while he was himself

Yea, in heart you work wickedness;
You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. 2

plotting the unnatural crime of rebellion against his father. See 2 Sam. xv. 2—6.

With this reading it is best to retain the rendering, *O ye sons of men*, in the next line, though it is also possible to render, *Do ye judge uprightly the sons of men?* The judges are addressed as *sons of men* to remind them that they are but human, and themselves subject to a higher tribunal.

ii. Most critics, however, think that here (as perhaps in the title of Ps. lvi also) the word *ēlĕm* should be read with different vowels, *ēlim*, 'gods,' or, 'mighty ones.' We must then render,

Do ye indeed, O ye gods, speak righteousness?
Do ye judge uprightly the sons of men?

The judges are addressed as *ēlīm*, 'gods,' as in Ps. lxxxii. 1, 6 they are called *elōhīm*, 'gods,' because in their judicial capacity they acted as the representatives of God, the supreme Judge. They are thus addressed here, half-sarcastically and half-reproachfully, in contrast to the 'sons of men,' over whom they exercise jurisdiction; as well as to emphasise the comparison between their failure to administer justice, and the righteous judgement of God (*v.* 11).

Ēlim however is not so used elsewhere, and may simply mean 'mighty ones.' Cp. Ex. xv. 15; 2 Kings xxiv. 15; Job xli. 25 (Heb. 17); Ezek. xvii. 13; xxxii. 21.

Cheyne and some other commentators find here a reference to the angels, "to whom the actual administration of the world's government has been entrusted." But there is nothing in the context to justify the importation of an idea which belongs to the later development of Jewish theology. It is true that it is found in the LXX of Deut. xxxii. 8, "He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God"; but this paraphrase has no claim to be regarded as representing the original text.

iii. None of the Ancient Versions however give any support to this emendation. The LXX and Jerome render *ēlĕm* as an adverb ('then' or 'certainly'); the Syr. omits it; Aquila and the Targ. attest the reading of the text. Plausible as the emendation is, it must not be made a basis of argument, and the obscurity of the passage must be admitted.

2. *Yea*] Or, **Nay**, for the particle implies a negative answer, and an additional accusation. Far from judging equitably, you are yourselves the greatest offenders.

in heart] Inwardly they are ever contriving some scheme of injustice, like the nobles against whom Micah inveighs (ii. 1), as "working evil upon their beds."

ye weigh] R.V., **ye weigh out.** There is a bitter irony in the use of a word strictly applicable to justice only. For the metaphor of the 'scales of justice' cp. Job xxxi. 6.

in the earth] Or, *in the land;* publicly and openly, carrying into execution the schemes they contrive in their hearts. Cp. Mic. ii. 1.

3 The wicked are estranged from the womb:
They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies.
4 Their poison *is* like the poison of a serpent:
They are like the deaf adder *that* stoppeth her ear;
5 Which will not hearken to the voice of charmers,
Charming *never so* wisely.
6 Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth:
Break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD.

3—5. A description of the class to which these wicked judges belong; the deliberately wicked, who are deaf to remonstrance and incapable of reformation.

3. *are estranged*] From God and His laws. Cp. Eph. iv. 18, "alienated from the life of God": Col. i. 21, "alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works," where St Paul uses the word (ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι) employed by the LXX here.

"The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21); but these men have shewn a more than ordinary aptitude for wickedness. It has become to them a second nature.

4, 5. They are not only insidious and venomous as serpents, but obstinately oppose all attempts to control them; like the deaf adder or **asp**, most venomous of all serpents, which resists all the arts of the charmer. The Arabs distinguish the 'deaf' serpent from that which answers the call of the charmer by hissing. Snake charming is alluded to in Eccl. x. 11; Jer. viii. 17; Ecclus. xii. 13, and is still practised in Africa and the East. As the asp is deaf to the voice of the enchanter, so these men shut their ears to the warnings and exhortations of the prophets.

Experience confirms the teaching of the Psalmist that among the endless varieties of human character, there are some which exhibit a diabolical aptitude for evil and opposition to good. In the light of God's infinite love, none are outside the pale of His mercy; yet it lies in the power of man to defeat the operations of His grace (Matt. xii. 31).

6—9. Since they are thus obstinately and incurably evil, nothing remains but that they should be deprived of their power to hurt or altogether destroyed.

6. The figure of the serpent, typical of insidious deadliness, is changed to that of the lion, typical of open ferocity.

Break...break out] Render them powerless for harm. Two strong words, properly used of breaking down and overthrowing walls. Cp. iii. 7; Job iv. 10: Prov. xxx. 14.

The LXX rendering of these verbs as perfects of certainty deserves consideration. It only requires a different vocalisation of the consonants, and gives an excellent sense: *God shall surely break* &c. The tenses in *vv.* 7, 8 must then be rendered as futures: *They shall melt away* &c. Such an authoritative declaration of the punishment in store for the wicked seems more in keeping with the prophetic tone of the Psalm than the prayer for their destruction.

Let them melt away as waters *which* run continually: 7
When he bendeth *his bow to shoot* his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces.
As a snail *which* melteth, let *every one of them* pass away: 8
Like the untimely birth of a woman, *that* they may not see the sun.
Before your pots can feel the thorns, 9
He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in *his* wrath.

7. *as waters* which *run continually*] R.V., restoring P.B.V., **as water that runneth apace**: like some torrent that rages wildly for a while when swollen by a sudden storm, and then vanishes entirely (Job vi. 15 ff.).

when *he bendeth* his bow to shoot *his arrows*] A cumbrous rendering of a peculiar phrase, the verb strictly applicable to the bow being used of the arrows (cp. lxiv. 3). Better as R.V., **when he aimeth his arrows.** But who is the subject? (1) It may be the wicked man, (as in lxiv. 3); **When he aimeth his arrows, let them be as though they were cut off** (R.V.), their points broken, and their power to hurt destroyed. (2) It may be God (as in vii. 12 f.); **when He aimeth His arrows, let them** (the wicked) **be as it were mowed down.** Cp. xc. 6. Neither alternative is free from serious difficulties, but the first seems preferable.

8. Let them be like a snail which melts away and is gone: Like the untimely births of women, that have not seen the sun.

Two more figures for the destruction of the wicked:—let them melt away; nay, vanish as though they had never existed.

The word *shablūl* puzzled the ancient translators. The LXX render it 'wax' (doubtless to suit the verb 'melt'), Jerome 'worm'; but later Hebrew attests the meaning *snail*. But what is the point of comparison? Is it that the snail seems to melt away as it goes along, leaving a slimy track behind it, or perhaps was popularly supposed to do so? or is it not rather an allusion to the way in which snails dry up and perish in drought? There are to be found in all parts of Palestine "myriads of snail shells in fissures, still adhering by the calcareous exudation round their orifice to the surface of the rock, but the animal of which is utterly shrivelled and wasted—'melted away,' according to the expression of the Psalmist." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 296.

For the second figure cp. Job iii. 16; Eccl. vi. 3—5. *That they may not see the sun* (A.V.) is an ungrammatical rendering.

9. The general sense of the verse is clear, though the second line is extremely obscure and possibly corrupt. The first line certainly means, *Before your pots can feel the thorns* (possibly a proverbial expression), and the verb in the second line means, *He shall sweep them* (or, *it*) *away with a whirlwind.* It is another figure for the swift destruction of the wicked and their schemes, taken from the experience of travel in the

10 The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance:
He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.

desert. The travellers have lighted a fire of dry thorns or brambles under their cooking pots. It blazes up rapidly, but even so, before the pots are heated and the meat in them cooked, a sudden whirlwind sweeps away the fire and undoes their work. The fire represents the malicious will of the evildoers, the pots with the meat the plans which they are devising: but let them work never so rapidly, the whirlwind of divine judgement will annihilate their schemes.

The crux of the verse is in the words rendered in A.V. *both living and in* his *wrath*. They have been supposed to refer to the thorns, *the green and the burning alike:* or to the flesh in the pot, *the raw flesh and the sodden alike:* or to the flesh and the fire, *the raw flesh and hot embers alike:* but all these interpretations break down on the fact that *chārōn*, though not a rare word, always means *the burning wrath of God*. It seems necessary either to omit the word *k'mō*, 'as,' before *chārōn*, or to read *b'mō*, 'in,' instead of it (בכמו for כמו). We may then render, **Like raw flesh** (=perhaps, *while the flesh is yet raw*), **shall Wrath sweep them away with a whirlwind**; or, **shall He sweep them away with a whirlwind in wrath.** The pronoun for *them* is in the singular, and may mean each one of the wicked, or perhaps rather *it*, the whole scheme. For a figure from cooking cp. Hos. vii. 4 ff.: for the thorn fires Is. xxxiii. 12; Eccl. vii. 6; and for the whirlwind of divine wrath see l. 3, "it shall be very tempestuous round about him"; Job xxvii. 21.

10, 11. The issues of the judgement: the righteous rejoice in the discomfiture of their oppressors: men in general recognise the reality of God's moral government of the world.

10. *The righteous shall rejoice* &c.] On the moral aspects of the triumph of the godly at the just punishment of the wicked see note on v. 11, and generally, *Introd.* pp. lxx ff. It is important to observe that the rejoicing of the righteous is at the vengeance which God has taken upon the wicked, and that that vengeance is only taken upon those who have wilfully and obstinately resisted every effort for their reformation (*vv.* 4, 5). God has proclaimed, "Vengeance is mine" (Deut. xxxii. 35; cp. Nah. i. 2); in other words the time must come when evil can no longer be tolerated but must be extirpated (2 Thes. i. 8); and the righteous cannot but rejoice at the triumph of good over evil and the proof that God is true to His revealed character as a just Judge and sovereign Ruler. It is not for them to usurp God's function and avenge themselves, but they must rejoice when right is vindicated. In the O.T. that joy took a concrete form which is repugnant to us, who have learned to distinguish between the sinner and his sin: it is not the spirit of the Gospel: but we may well beware lest the right feeling of moral indignation, not only against wrong in the abstract but against the wrong-doer, should be weakened.

he shall wash his feet &c.] The metaphorical and hyperbolical lan-

So that a man shall say, Verily *there is* a reward for the righteous: 11
Verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.

guage of a warlike age. Cp. Ps. lxviii. 23; and for a similar metaphor see Job xxix. 6.

11. *So that a man shall say*] Rather, **So that men shall say**: the mass of men, who are neither 'righteous' nor 'wicked,' but as it were spectators of the conflict between the righteous and the wicked.

Verily] This particle expresses the recognition of a truth which has been obscured or questioned: 'after all,' 'surely.' Cp. lxxiii. 1.

a reward] Lit. *fruit*. Cf. Is. iii. 10. Their patient continuance in well-doing bears its harvest in due time (Gal. vi. 9).

verily he is a God] Better, **Verily there is a God** (R.V.). Contrary however to the general usage when GOD is spoken of, the predicate is in the plural: and perhaps *Ĕlōhīm* is meant to be taken somewhat more vaguely, in parallelism and contrast to the judges of *vv.* 1, 2—the contrast holds whether *ēlīm*, 'gods,' is read in *v.* 1 or not—as *Divine Powers*. But the reading is not above suspicion. The LXX and Syr. have *that judgeth them*, i.e. does the righteous justice (xliii. 1), the final *m* being read as the pronominal suffix, not as the sign of the plural[1].

For like confidence in the final manifestation of God's judgement see vii. 11 ff.; ix. 7 ff., 19; xi. 4 ff.; and cp. Lk. xviii. 7 ff.

PSALM LIX.

This Psalm is another prayer for deliverance from virulent enemies who are threatening the Psalmist's life. It consists of two principal divisions (1—9, 10—17) each ending with a refrain. These are again subdivided; the end of the first stanza in each being marked by a *Selah*, and the initial verse of the second (6, 14) being the same.

i. (1) In peril of his life from truculent enemies the Psalmist cries for help (1, 2). Emphasising the fact that their attack is unprovoked, he prays Jehovah to interpose and punish all the antagonists of His people (3—5).

(2) He describes the menacing behaviour and the scornful godlessness of his enemies (6, 7), and declares his confidence that Jehovah will treat them with sovereign contempt (8, 9).

ii. (1) Starting from the height of this confidence (*v.* 10) he prays that they may be humbled, yet not utterly destroyed, but left for a warning example, till their own sin proves their ruin (11, 12), and their final disappearance demonstrates the sovereignty of Jacob's God (13).

[1] They must have found שׁפטם written defectively and read *shōph'tām* not *shōph'tīm*.

(2) Returning to the present, he contrasts the baffled rage of his pursuers (14, 15) with his own hymns of thanksgiving for deliverance (16, 17).

Thus the Psalm strikes the familiar note of unshaken trust in God under circumstances of danger and difficulty. Its constant recurrence in the Psalter is doubtless intended to provide a large variety of comfort and encouragement for the various circumstances of trial to which the godly are exposed.

But what were the actual circumstances of the Psalmist? According to the title the Psalm refers to the occasion in David's life "when Saul sent, and they watched the house to kill him." The narrative in 1 Sam. xix. 8 ff relates that after Saul's unsuccessful attempt upon his life David fled and escaped. "And it came to pass that night" (so we should read with the LXX) "that Saul sent messengers to David's house to watch it, that he might slay him in the morning." Michal however contrived to effect his escape by letting him down through a window.

There is much in the Psalm which suits David's situation. Not on that particular night only but for some time previously his life had been in danger. Saul had spoken "to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should slay David" (1 Sam. xix. 1); and doubtless there were men (*v.* 3) in Saul's retinue ready to curry favour with their master by secretly despatching him, treacherous ruffians who might well be compared to the hungry and savage dogs which infest oriental towns. David's enemies had been using the weapons of false and cruel calumny with the view of effecting his ruin. With *vv.* 7, 12 cp. 1 Sam. xxiv. 9; xxvi. 19. Again and again he protested his innocence and the groundlessness of the persecution he was suffering. With *vv.* 3, 4 cp. 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxiv. 11; xxvi. 18 ff; and Ps. vii.

The connexion of the Psalm with this episode in David's life is however commonly set aside on the ground that the Psalmist's foes are described as foreigners (*vv.* 5, 8), and 'my people' (*v.* 11) seems to imply that he is a king or at least in a position of authority.

Ewald supposed that the Psalm was written by Josiah when Jerusalem was threatened by the marauding bands of the Scythians; others have attributed it to Nehemiah, when he was hindered in his work of rebuilding the walls by the Samaritans and their confederates (Neh. iv. 1 ff, 7 ff; vi. 1 ff). But neither of these conjectures is satisfactory. The enemies appear to be personal; one of their chief weapons is calumny; it is the Psalmist's life which is in danger, rather than the city, or the cause which he represents.

It is indeed not quite certain (see the notes) that the 'heathen' of *vv.* 5, 8, are the Psalmist's own immediate enemies: but if they are, the data do not seem to be entirely consistent. Is it possible that we have here a Psalm written by David, or possibly by some later poet, with reference to the occasion stated in the title, and subsequently adapted for liturgical use by the introduction of prayers for the judgement of the enemies of the nation?

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, Michtam of David; when Saul sent, and they watcht the house to kill him.

Deliver me from mine enemies, O my God: 59
Defend me from them that rise up against me.
Deliver me from the workers of iniquity, 2
And save me from bloody men.
For lo, they lie in wait for my soul: 3
The mighty are gathered against me;
Not *for* my transgression, nor *for* my sin, O LORD.
They run and prepare themselves without *my* fault: 4
Awake to help me, and behold.
Thou therefore, O LORD God *of* hosts, the God of Israel, 5
Awake to visit all the heathen:
Be not merciful to any wicked transgressors. Selah.

1—5. The Psalmist prays for deliverance from the enemies who are bent on taking his life, pleading his innocence, and appealing to God to punish all injustice.

1. *Deliver me*] So vii. 1, and frequently.

defend me] Better, as R.V., **set me on high** (xx. 1; xci. 14). It is the verb from which is derived the epithet 'high tower' so often applied to God (*vv.* 9, 16, 17; xviii. 2; xlvi. 7, 11).

2. *from bloody men*] Better, **from bloodthirsty men** (v. 6; lv. 23; cxxxix. 19; Prov. xxix. 10).

3, 4. **For, lo, strong ones have laid wait for my life,**
They gather themselves together against me,
For no transgression or sin of mine, Jehovah.
For no iniquity (of mine) they run and station themselves:
Arouse thee to meet me, and behold.

Observe the tenses. Secret plots (cp. Prov. i. 11; Mic. vii. 2) have long been going on: now they are preparing a more open attack (liv. 3; lvi. 6). In this crisis he calls upon God to arouse Himself from His apparent slumber of indifference (xliv. 23), and 'meet him' as with an army of relief. For 'behold' (lit. *see*) cp. x. 14; xxv. 18; xxxi. 7.

The transgression, sin, iniquity, of which he protests his innocence, might refer to offences against God, for which this persecution might have been sent as a punishment (1 Sam. xxvi. 19); but more probably they refer to offences against his persecutors. Their hostility is unprovoked. Exactly the same words are used by David in protesting his innocence of treasonable designs against Saul, 1 Sam. xx. 1; xxiv. 11.

5. **Yea, do Thou, Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel,**
Awake to visit all the nations:
Be not gracious to any treacherous workers of iniquity.

THOU is emphatic, and the address virtually means, 'since Thou art God of hosts, and God of Israel.' The first title implies that He has

6 They return at evening:
They make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
7 Behold, they belch out with their mouth:
Swords *are* in their lips:
For who, *say they*, doth hear?

the power (xlvi. 7, note), the second that He is under the obligation, to interpose and 'visit,' hold inquisition concerning, the nations, to punish them for their offences. But who are meant by the 'nations' or 'heathen'? Are they the enemies against whom the Psalmist is praying, and identical with the 'treacherous workers of iniquity,' mentioned in the next line? If so, the Psalmist's enemies are foreigners, for usage does not justify the interpretation of *gōyīm* as 'heathenishly minded men'; and if the Psalm is in its original form, it cannot have been written by David with reference to Saul and his myrmidons. But it is possible that, as in Ps. vii, the prayer for a judgement upon personal enemies is expanded into a prayer for a judgement upon all the enemies of Israel: and in that general judgement the treacherous Israelites who are iniquitously plotting against the Psalmist's life will meet their due reward. Similarly in *v.* 8, 'them' will refer to the Psalmist's personal enemies, 'the heathen' or 'nations' to the enemies of Israel. It is also possible, as has been suggested above, that the Psalm has been altered for liturgical use.

The anomalous form of the combination *Jehovah the God of hosts* here and in lxxx. 4, 19; lxxxiv. 8 (*Jehovah Elōhim Tsebāōth* not *Jehovah Elōhē Tsebāōth*) makes it probable that the original reading was simply *Jehovah of hosts*, and that *God* is the substitution of the Elohistic editor for *Jehovah*, which however has survived or has been restored along with it.

Be not gracious is the opposite to the Psalmist's prayer for himself, lvi. 1, lvii. 1.

6—9. Be his enemies never so threatening and insolent, he can trust in God.

6. He compares his enemies to a troop of savage and hungry dogs (xxii. 16) such as still infest Oriental towns, in the day-time sleeping in the sun or slinking lazily about, but as night comes on collecting together, and traversing the streets in search of food, howling dismally. P.B.V. *grin* means 'snarl.' Cp. Shakespeare, 2 *Hen. VI*, iii. 1. 18, quoted in Wright's *Bible Word-Book*,

> "Small curs are not regarded when they *grin;*
> But great men tremble when the lion roars."

7. The figure of *v.* 6 is dropped. A flood of cursing and falsehood (*v.* 12) pours from their mouth (Prov. xv. 2, 28); they menace him with death, or openly boast that he will soon be got rid of; cp. lii. 2, note.

'Say they' is rightly inserted. 'Who doth hear'? is not the Psalmist's

But thou, O LORD, shalt laugh at them; 8
Thou shalt have all the heathen in derision.
Because of his strength will I wait upon thee: 9
For God *is* my defence.

The God of my mercy shall prevent me: 10
God shall let me see *my desire* upon mine enemies.

complaint that there is no one to take his part, but the scornful sneer of his enemies, who do not believe that God cares for His servant. Cp. x. 4, 11, 13; lxiv. 5; lxxiii. 11; xciv. 7.

8. The verbs are the same as in ii. 4: cp. xxxvii. 13; Is. xxxvii. 22. The bold phrase "expresses generally the truth that the machinations of God's enemies are not less absurd than wicked." *Speaker's Comm.*

For the meaning of 'heathen' or 'nations,' see note on *v.* 5.

9. O my strength, unto thee will I watch:
For God is my high tower.

His enemies are 'strong' (*v.* 3); but God is his strength; they watch his house (title), but he will 'watch unto God,' waiting in faith for His help; he has prayed that God will 'set him up on high,' and he is confident of an answer, for God Himself is his 'high tower' of refuge.

The A.V. 'because of *his strength*' follows the Massoretic Text; but some MSS., the LXX, Vulg., Jer., and Targ., read, as in *v.* 17, *my strength*, which is doubtless right. P.B.V. retains *my* from the Vulg., though adopting an impossible rendering, 'My strength will I ascribe unto thee.' It is unnecessary to follow the Syr. in reading as in *v.* 17, *I will make melody*, for *I will watch;* but possibly the words *the God of my lovingkindness* originally stood at the end of this verse as well as of *v.* 17. See note on *v.* 10.

10—13. His enemies will be punished: yet let them not be utterly destroyed forthwith, but kept awhile for a warning, till they perish through their own iniquity, an evidence of the sovereignty of God.

10. The *Kthībh*, with which the LXX agrees, has *My God shall meet me with His lovingkindness:* but the *Qrī* is, *The God of my lovingkindness shall meet me.* This variety of reading possibly points to an original text, in which *v.* 9 ended with the words, *the God of my lovingkindness*, and *v.* 10 began, *His lovingkindness* (or, *My God with his lovingkindness*) *shall meet me.* Cp. lxxix. 8. The loss of the words would be easily accounted for by the similarity between the end of *v.* 9 and the beginning of *v.* 10. Cp. note on xlii. 5, 6.

shall prevent me] **shall come to meet me**; in answer to the prayer of *v.* 4. For the archaism *prevent* cp. xxi. 3.

shall let me see my desire] Cp. liv. 7, note. The same phrase occurs on the Moabite Stone, where Mesha says that he erected the high place to Chemosh, "because he let me see my desire upon all that hated me."

upon mine enemies] **Upon them that lie in wait for me.** See note on liv. 5.

11 Slay them not, lest my people forget:
Scatter them by thy power;
And bring them down, O Lord our shield.
12 *For* the sin of their mouth *and* the words of their lips
Let them even be taken in their pride:
And for cursing and lying *which* they speak.
13 Consume *them* in wrath, consume *them*, that they *may* not *be:*
And let them know that God ruleth in Jacob
Unto the ends of the earth. Selah.

11. *Slay them not*] Apparently inconsistent with *v.* 13; but burning indignation does not study logical consistency. What he desires is that they may not be destroyed outright by some signal catastrophe, but visibly punished as a living example, until at last their own wickedness proves their destruction. Cp. Ex. ix. 15, 16 (R.V.). Pharaoh might have been cut off at once, but was suffered to exist, till his obstinate resistance sealed his doom, and enhanced God's sovereignty. The Fathers applied the words to the Jews in their dispersion, scattered but not consumed, an ever visible memorial of divine judgement.

scatter them by thy power] Rather, **make them wander to and fro by thine army**, as vagabonds and outcasts (cix. 10; Gen. iv. 12, 14; Num. xxxii. 13). The word rendered *by thy power* in A.V. is never used of God's might, but may mean (cp. Joel ii. 25; iii. 11) the heavenly army which God has at His command. Cp. xxxv. 5, 6.

bring them down] Cp. lv. 23; lvi. 7.

our shield] The Psalmist speaks as the representative of the nation, or at least of a class. For the metaphor cp. iii. 3; Gen. xv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 29; Ps. xviii. 2; &c.

12. The A.V. gives the sense, though the precise construction is doubtful. Perhaps, *The word of their lips is the sin of their mouth*, i.e. every word they utter is sin: or, *O the sin of their mouth! O the word of their lips! let them* &c.

let them even be taken] Caught in their own snare, their plots recoiling on themselves. Cp. ix. 15; xxxv. 8; Prov. xi. 6.

in their pride] The atheistic self-sufficiency which says, Who doth hear? Cp. x. 4.

13. *Consume* them *in wrath, consume* them] For the emphatic repetition cp. lvii. 1, 7, 8; and for the wrath of divine judgement cp. lvi. 7.

that they may *not* be] Better as R.V., **that they be no more.**

and let them know] It is best to regard the subject of the verb as indefinite, *let men know*; and to connect *unto the ends of the earth* with this clause. Let it be known throughout the length and breadth of the world. Cp. 1 Sam. xvii. 46: 'that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.' The P.B.V. 'that it is God that ruleth in Jacob, and unto the ends of the world,' gives an equally good sense, but requires the insertion of the conjunction.

And at evening let them return;
And let them make a noise like a dog,
And go round about the city.
Let them wander up and down for meat,
And grudge if they be not satisfied.
But I will sing of thy power;
Yea, I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning:
For thou hast been my defence
And refuge in the day of my trouble.
Unto thee, O my strength, will I sing:
For God *is* my defence, *and* the God of my mercy.

14—17. The Psalmist contrasts the baffled rage of his persecutors with his own calm trust in God.

14. A repetition of *v.* 6. But is it (1) as the A.V. appears to take it, an ironical repetition as a curse? let them do now perforce what they did before in malice and wantonness, wandering to and fro (cp. *v.* 11) in unsatisfied hunger. Or is it (2) a reiterated description of the writer's present situation, introduced here to emphasise the contrast of his own security under Jehovah's protection? The second alternative is preferable, as giving full force to the emphatic *they* (*v.* 15) and *But I* (*v.* 16). Render,

And though they return at evening, howl like dogs, and go round about the city,
Though they wander to and fro for meat,
And tarry all night if they be not satisfied;
Yet as for me, I shall sing &c.

The prey of which they were in quest was the Psalmist himself. Disappointed in their attempt they might tarry all night, yet he is confident that the dawn will see him still safe, and bring fresh occasion for praise. The A.V. *grudge*, i.e. murmur, follows the LXX and Jer.; but the contrast 'in the morning' (*v.* 15) is in favour of R.V. (cp. A.V. marg.) **tarry all night.**

16, 17. Render,

Yet as for me, I shall sing of thy strength;
Yea, I shall sing aloud of thy lovingkindness in the morning:
For thou hast been a high tower for me,
And a refuge in the day of my distress.
Unto thee, O my strength, will I make melody,
For God is my high tower, the God of my lovingkindness.

Thou hast been, for in the language of faith he looks back upon the deliverance from the morning of peace which succeeds the night of anxiety.

The refrain is slightly varied from *v.* 9: the patient waiting of the night is changed into the joyous song of the morning.

PSALM LX.

According to the title this Psalm refers to an event in the wars of David, "when he was contending with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, and Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt twelve thousand." David's conquest of Edom is recorded in 2 Sam. viii. 13 f, but (see note on the passage in this series) the text of *v.* 13 is certainly corrupt, and we should probably read, "And David gat him a name when he returned from smiting the Syrians and smote of Edom in the Valley of Salt eighteen thousand." It has been most plausibly conjectured (see Ewald, *Hist.* iii. 156, E.T.) that while David was fully occupied in the north with the Syrian war, the Edomites seized the opportunity for invading the south of Judah, and inflicted serious damage. Had their plans been entirely successful, David's victories in the north would have been rendered useless. It was a critical moment; but David promptly detached a force, which routed the Edomites with great slaughter in the Valley of Salt. This was the valley to the south of the Dead Sea, which was the ancient border between Judah and Edom, and was the scene of another victory over Edom in the reign of Amaziah (2 Kings xiv. 7). The victory was followed up by the complete subjugation of the country. From an incidental notice in 1 Kings xi. 15, 16 we learn that the war was pursued with relentless severity. The signal vengeance which was taken upon Edom is more readily intelligible if the Edomites had attempted to use the opportunity of David's absence for striking a deadly blow at Judah. The phrase "gat him a name" (i.e. won renown) in 2 Sam. viii. 13 may refer to the admiration excited by the skill and promptitude with which David met the sudden danger to his kingdom.

The Psalm may be supposed to have been written at the moment when David received the news of the defeat inflicted by Edom, and was despatching Joab to repel the invaders. It was an anxious crisis; for it must have seemed doubtful whether these reverses in the south would not compel him to abandon his conquests in the north, and might not even endanger the safety of the kingdom.

That the victory over Edom is attributed to David in 2 Sam., to Abishai in 1 Chr. xviii. 12, and to Joab in the title of the Psalm, need cause no difficulty. David was concerned in it as king, and to his military genius may have been due the plan of the campaign and the promptitude of action; Joab was the commander-in-chief of the army; Abishai may have led the division which was sent forward in advance. The variation between *twelve thousand* here and *eighteen thousand* in 2 Sam. and 1 Chron. is probably due to a textual error.

Aram-naharaim, or Syria of the two Rivers, was probably not Mesopotamia, but the country between the Euphrates and Chaboras, or in the neighbourhood of these rivers. It is not mentioned in 2 Sam. viii, but in 2 Sam. x. 16, it is said that Hadadezer brought into the field the Syrians that were beyond the River (Euphrates), and in 1 Chr. xix. 6 Aram-naharaim (A.V. Mesopotamia) is mentioned along with Zobah. The exact position of Zobah is uncertain: it seems to have been north-

east of Damascus and south of Hamath, between the Orontes and the Euphrates.

The accuracy of the title has been questioned upon various grounds. It is not a valid argument against it that 2 Sam. does not mention such a disaster as that to which the Psalm refers. Reverses would not be recorded in the brief summary of David's victories which is all that the history gives; and an invasion which for the moment seemed most alarming would fade into insignificance when the danger was past. The hypothesis of such an invasion certainly explains and connects the fragmentary notices in Samuel and Kings. Nor does the Psalm necessarily imply a prolonged period of disaster. An attack which imperilled the safety of the kingdom would quite account for the language of *vv.* 1 ff.

Numerous conjectures as to the occasion of the Psalm have been proposed by commentators who reject the title. Some would connect it with Amaziah's war with Edom (2 Kings xiv. 7). Not a few would bring it down to the Maccabaean times, chiefly on the ground of its relation to Ps. xliv in tone and language (cp. xliv. 9 with *v.* 10). But none of the occasions in that period with which it has been connected is really suitable, and it has already been shewn in the Introd. to Ps. xliv that the history of the formation of the Psalter makes it difficult to suppose that Maccabaean Psalms are included in the Elohistic collection. It may reasonably be maintained that the situation indicated in the title explains the Psalm more satisfactorily than any alternative which has been suggested.

The Psalm is to be sung to the melody known as *Shushan-eduth*, that is, *The lily of testimony*. Cp. the title of Ps. lxxx, *set to Shoshannim-Eduth*, and also those of Pss. xlv, lxix. It is intended *for teaching*, probably, like David's elegy on Saul and Jonathan, to be committed to memory for recitation. Cp. Deut. xxxi. 22.

vv. 5—12 form the second part of the composite Ps. cviii.

The Psalm may be divided into three stanzas as follows:

i. David expostulates with God for abandoning His people to disaster and defeat (1—4).

ii. He appeals to God's promise to apportion the land to His people, and give them dominion over the neighbouring nations (5—8).

iii. Though God has for the time deserted His people it is He alone Who can help; and to Him David turns in confident assurance of victory (9—12).

To the chief Musician upon Shushan-eduth, Michtam of David, to teach; when he strove with Aram-naharaim and with Aram-zobah, when Joab returned, and smote of Edom in the valley of salt twelve thousand.

O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, 60

1—4. Grave disasters have befallen Israel through God's displeasure.

1. *thou hast cast us off*] Cp. *v.* 10; xliv. 9, 23; lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7; lxxxix. 38.

thou hast scattered us] Better as R.V., **thou hast broken us down**, a word applied to defeat (2 Sam. v. 20), or any great calamity (Jud. xxi. 15;

Thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.
2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it:
Heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.
3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard *things:*
Thou hast made us to drink the wine *of* astonishment.
4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee,
That *it* may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.

Job xvi. 14). It is a metaphor from the destruction of a wall or a building (2 Kings xiv. 13; Is. v. 5).

thou hast been displeased] R.V. rightly, **thou hast been angry**, as A.V. elsewhere (ii. 12; lxxix. 5; 1 Kings viii. 46; &c.). Israel's neighbours used exactly the same language. Mesha in the inscription known as the Moabite Stone says that Omri the king of Israel oppressed Moab many days, "because Chemosh was angry with his land" (*l.* 5).

O turn thyself to us again] Better, **O grant us restoration.**

2. *Thou hast made* &c.] R.V. **Thou hast made the land to tremble; thou hast rent it.** The disaster is compared to an earthquake, which is often used as a symbol of great catastrophes and especially of divine judgement (xviii. 7; xlvi. 3, 6; Is. xxiv. 18 ff). 'The breaches' may be the rents and rifts in the solid ground, or by a very natural transition, the state is further compared to the buildings shattered by the earthquake and threatening to fall (lxii. 3; Is. xxx. 13; and for *heal=repair*, see Jer. xix. 11).

3. *hard*] i.e. calamitous.

the wine of astonishment] Better as R.V., **the wine of staggering.** The cup of God's wrath is a common metaphor for His judgements. It is like some drugged potion, which robs the drinker of reason, and makes him reel helplessly along, the mockery of all beholders. Commonly it is administered to the enemies of Israel (lxxv. 8; Jer. xxv. 15 ff); but also to Israel itself (Is. li. 17, 21 f).

4. *That* it *may be displayed because of the truth*] With this rendering, which has been retained in the text of the R.V., the verse becomes the preface to the following prayer. Israel is charged with the maintenance of God's cause, therefore let Him help them against the heathen. But it is decidedly preferable (cp. R.V. marg.) to follow the LXX, Vulg., Symm., and Jer. in rendering, **That they may betake themselves to flight from before the bow** (cp. Is. xxxi. 8). The verse then forms the conclusion of the first stanza of the Psalm. By 'them that fear thee' Israel is meant; and the word implies that Israel is loyal to Jehovah (cp. xliv. 17 ff). He has 'given them a banner' (cp. Is. v. 26; xiii. 2; Jer. iv. 6), raised a standard to summon them to fight for His cause (for the cause of the nation was the cause of its God), in order that they should be put to flight before the enemy's archers. The words are reproachfully sarcastic, and there is no need to weaken the sarcasm by inserting *only* before *that they may betake themselves to flight*. God has deliberately mustered His people and led them forth to defeat. They recall (though their spirit is wholly different) the complaint of the

That thy beloved may be delivered; 5
Save *with* thy right hand, and hear me.
God hath spoken in his holiness; 6
I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem,
And mete out the valley of Succoth.

Israelites in the wilderness, "Because the LORD hated us, he hath brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us" (Deut. i. 27).

The view that *vv.* 1—4 form the first stanza of the Psalm is confirmed by the position of *Selah*, by the commencement of the extract in Ps. cviii with *v.* 5, and by the symmetry of structure which is given by a division at this point.

5—8. A prayer for deliverance and victory, based upon God's promise to give Israel the possession of Canaan, and supremacy over the neighbouring nations.

5. *thy beloved*] *Thy beloved ones* (plur.) are Israel. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 12; Jer. xi. 15. God's love for Israel is the counterpart to Israel's fear of God.

save] i.e. give victory. Cp. *v.* 11.

hear me] **Answer me.** The *Kthībh* has *us*, which R.V. adopts; but the *Qrī* is *me*. This has the support of the Ancient Versions and is preferable. David is the speaker. Cp. *v.* 9.

6. *in his holiness*] Or, **by his holiness**, for 'spoken' is the equivalent of 'promised' or 'sworn.' Cp. lxxxix. 35; Am. iv. 2. God's 'holiness' includes His whole essential nature in its moral aspect, and that nature makes it impossible for Him to break His promise (Num. xxiii. 19; Tit. i. 2). It is equivalent to 'Himself' (Am. vi. 8; Heb. vi. 13, 17 f). 'In his sanctuary' (cp. lxiii. 2) is a possible but less probable rendering.

I will rejoice] Better as R.V., **I will exult.** But who is the speaker? Is it David or God? The latter alternative is certainly preferable. The language is bold, but not bolder than that of Is. lxiii. 1 ff. God is represented as a victorious warrior, conquering the land, and portioning it out to His people. The language recalls the conquest of the land under Joshua (Josh. xviii. 10); but it certainly does not imply that the land was now permanently in the possession of foreigners, and needing to be reconquered. He makes Ephraim the chief defence of His kingdom, and Judah the seat of government, and treats the neighbouring nations as His vassals. It is possible that some actual oracle is quoted, but more probable that the drift of the great promise to David (2 Sam. vii. 9 f) is freely reproduced in a poetical form. Cp. ii. 7; lxxxix. 19.

Shechem...the valley of Succoth] Shechem, as a central place of importance, represents the territory west of the Jordan; Succoth, 'in the vale' (Josh. xiii. 27), somewhere to the south of the Jabbok, between Peniel and the Jordan, represents the territory east of the Jordan. These two places may be named, because of their connexion with the

7 Gilead *is* mine, and Manasseh *is* mine;
Ephraim also *is* the strength of mine head;
Judah *is* my lawgiver;
8 Moab *is* my washpot;
Over Edom will I cast out my shoe:
Philistia, triumph thou because of me.

history of Jacob, who halted first at Succoth and then at Shechem, when he returned to Canaan (Gen. xxxiii. 17, 18). God will fulfil His promise to Jacob, apportioning to His people the land in which their great ancestor settled.

7. *Gilead* and *Manasseh*, that is the land of Bashan in which half the tribe of Manasseh settled, stand for the territory east of the Jordan and the tribes settled there: Ephraim and Judah stand for the tribes west of the Jordan. God claims all as His own: all therefore can claim God's protection.

Ephraim &c.] Render with R.V.,

Ephraim also is the defence of mine head;
Judah is my sceptre.

Ephraim, as the most powerful tribe and the chief defence of the nation, is compared to the warrior's helmet: Judah, as the tribe to which belonged the Davidic sovereignty, is compared to the royal sceptre, or, as the same word is rendered in R.V. of Gen. xlix. 10, to which the present passage alludes, 'the ruler's staff.'

8. The neighbouring nations are reduced to servitude. In strong contrast to the honour assigned to Ephraim and Judah is the disgrace of Moab and Edom. Moab, notorious for its pride (Is. xvi. 6), is compared to the vessel which is brought to the victorious warrior to wash his feet when he returns from the battle. The old enemy of God and His people is degraded to do menial service: in other words, it becomes a subject and a vassal.

In close connexion with this metaphor the next line may be rendered, **Unto Edom will I cast my shoe**: Edom is like the slave to whom the warrior flings his sandals to carry or to clean. Haughty and defiant Edom (Obad. 3 f.) must perform the duty of the lowest slave (cp. Matt. iii. 11). The R.V. renders, **Upon Edom will I cast my shoe.** This would mean, 'I will take possession of Edom,' in allusion to an Oriental custom of taking possession of land by casting the shoe upon it; but the first explanation agrees best with the context.

Philistia, triumph thou because of me] R.V., **shout thou because of me.** Mighty Philistia must raise the shout of homage to its conqueror. Cp. ii. 11; xviii. 44; xlvii. 1. This rendering is preferable to that of A.V. marg. (with its explanatory note) '*triumph thou over me* (by an irony)': and to the rendering, '*cry aloud in terror.*' But perhaps we should alter the vocalisation and read: *Over Philistia shall be my shout of triumph*, or adopt the reading of cviii. 9, *Over Philistia will I shout in triumph.*

Who will bring me *into* the strong city?
Who will lead me into Edom?
Wilt not thou, O God, *which* hadst cast us off? 10
And *thou*, O God, *which* didst not go out with our armies?
Give us help from trouble: 11
For vain *is* the help of man.
Through God we shall do valiantly: 12
For he *it is that* shall tread down our enemies.

9—12. None but God can give help, and though for the moment He has abandoned His people, He will surely once more lead them to victory.

9. *the strong city*] Probably Sela or Petra, the capital of Edom, famous for its inaccessibility (Obad. 3). See Stanley's *Sinai and Pal.*, p. 89, for a description of the wonderful defile, which in ancient times was the only usual approach to Petra.

Who will lead me into Edom] The verb is in the perfect tense, which is sometimes used in questions to express a sense of difficulty or hopelessness. Who could lead me, or, who could have led me, right into (the preposition is emphatic) Edom? The difficulties are almost insuperable. But possibly the text is faulty. The restoration of one letter with a change in the vocalisation would give the future tense. In any case the rendering of R.V., *Who hath led me unto Edom?* as a reference to some previous successful invasion, does not suit the context.

10. Wilt *not thou, O God* &c.] This rendering, which is that of the LXX, Vulg., Symm., and Jer., is grammatically legitimate, though less obvious than that of R.V.;

Hast not thou, O God, cast us off?
And thou goest not forth, O God, with our hosts.

It suits the context better as the answer to *v.* 9 in a tone of confidence which corresponds to that of *v.* 12. Though God has for the moment deserted us, and has not led our armies to victory, He will surely now give us help, for we trust in Him alone. The rendering of R.V. introduces a note of despair, which harmonises ill with the confidence of *v.* 12. With it the connexion of thought would be, Who can lead us into the enemy's stronghold? None but God, and God has deserted us. Yet even now perhaps He will hear our prayer (*v.* 11). With the second line cp. xliv. 9.

11. *Give us help from trouble*] Or, as R.V., **Give us help against the adversary.** Cp. *v.* 12.

for vain is *the help of man*] Lit. *salvation.* It is a delusion (cp. xxxiii. 17) to look to human strength for victory. See xliv. 6, 7; 1 Sam. xvii. 47; Jer. xvii. 5; and cp. Judg. vii. 4, 7; 1 Sam. xiv. 6; 2 Chron. xiv. 11; 1 Macc. iii. 16 ff.

12. *Through God*] Cp. lvi. 4.

we shall do valiantly] Cp. Num. xxiv. 18; Ps. cxviii. 15, 16.

shall tread down our enemies] Cp. xliv. 5; xviii. 42 (note). R.V., **adversaries**, cp. *v.* 11.

PSALM LXI.

The author of this Psalm is far from Jerusalem. Though his prayers have in part been answered, and he can look forward to his return with confidence, he is still in dispiriting circumstances. He is either a king, or one closely connected with a king and deeply interested in his welfare. At first sight *vv.* 6, 7 seem to favour the latter hypothesis; but inasmuch as the stress in these verses is upon the king's office, not upon his personality, a king might appropriately speak of himself in the third person; and this view best explains the connexion of the verses.

The Psalm belongs therefore to the time of the monarchy; for there is no real ground for supposing that one of the Maccabaean princes, of whom Aristobulus I (B.C. 105) was the first to assume the title of king, is meant. If David was the author, it may best be referred to the time when he was at Mahanaim, after the collapse of Absalom's rebellion, but before his recall to Jerusalem.

The hope of return to "God's dwelling-place," which finds such touching expression in this Psalm (*v.* 4), lay deep in his heart as he left the city (2 Sam. xv. 25); *v.* 3 may refer to the hairbreadth escapes of his earlier life; *vv.* 6, 7 allude to the great promise of 2 Sam. vii; the phrase 'God's tent' (*v.* 4) may naturally be connected with the tent which David pitched for the Ark. At any rate David's situation gives point to the Psalm and helps to explain it.

The Psalm is best divided into two equal stanzas.

i. Prayer for support and restoration to God's dwelling-place (1—4).

ii. He appeals to the experience of answered prayer and to the certainty of God's promises to the king, and looks forward with confidence to a life of thanksgiving for God's mercy (5—8).

The Psalm has affinities with Pss. xx, xxi, xxvii, xlii, xliii, lxiii, and with Proverbs.

In later times the Psalm was naturally adopted as a prayer of the nation in its dispersion, and the king was interpreted to refer to the Messiah. See the Targum on *vv.* 6, 8.

To the chief Musician upon Neginah, *A Psalm* of David.

61 Hear my cry, O God;
Attend unto my prayer.

Upon Neginath in the title may mean *On a stringed instrument* (R.V.), or *To the accompaniment of stringed music:* or possibly, *Set to the song of...*, some word of definition being lost. See *Introd.* p. xxii.

1—4. David prays that God will prove Himself a refuge as in time past, and that he may again live in His presence and under His protection in Jerusalem.

1. *my cry...my prayer*] Synonyms often coupled together to express the urgency of supplication. Cp. xvii. 1; 1 Kings viii. 28; Jer. vii. 16; xi. 14.

From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my 2
heart is overwhelmed:
Lead me to the rock *that* is higher than I.
For thou hast been a shelter for me, 3
And a strong tower from the enemy.
I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: 4
I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.

2. *From the end of the earth*] Perhaps, *from the end of the land.* But Jerusalem, the dwelling-place of God, is for him the centre of the earth. He measures his distance from it not by miles but by the intensity of his yearning to be there, in the place where the visible pledges of God's Presence were to be found.

will I cry] R.V., **will I call.**

is overwhelmed] Or, **fainteth** (cxlii. 3).

Lead me to the rock that *is higher than I*] **Lead me up upon a rock that is too high for me** to reach by my own unaided efforts. 'Rock' denotes an asylum to be reached, not an obstacle to be surmounted (xxvii. 5). God Himself is such a Rock of refuge (lxii. 2, 6, 7). David's wanderings may have suggested the metaphor (1 Sam. xxiv. 2; 1 Chron. xi. 15).

3. **For thou hast been a refuge for me,**
A strong tower from the enemy (R.V.).

He appeals to past experience. "In Thee have I taken refuge" is the constant cry with which faith approaches God (vii. 1; xi. 1; xvi. 1; xxxi. 1; lvii. 1; lxxi. 1; &c.). In xviii. 2 David addresses God as "my Rock in whom I take refuge." We may see from Jud. ix. 51 what 'a strong tower' meant literally: for the metaphor cp. Prov. xviii. 10.

4. **Let me sojourn in thy tent for ever:**
Let me take refuge in the hidingplace of thy wings.

The words are a prayer. In his banishment he prays that he may once more be received as Jehovah's guest, to enjoy His protection and hospitality, to dwell in the place which He has consecrated by His Presence (xv. 1). *In thy tent* may mean no more than 'in thy abode': but it is natural to connect the metaphor with the 'tent' which David pitched for the Ark on Mount Zion (2 Sam. vi. 17). Cp. xxvii. 5, 6. 'Sojourn' implies the relation of guest to host, and the protection which the guest in Oriental countries claims from his host. "The Arabs give the title of *jār allāh* to one who resides in Mecca beside the Caaba." Robertson Smith, *Religion of the Semites*, p. 77.

for ever] All my life. Cp. 1 Sam. i. 22; Ps. xxiii. 6. And the revelation of the Gospel has made it plain that life does not end with death.

For *the hidingplace* (R.V. *covert*) *of thy wings* cp. lvii. 1, note; xxvii. 5, "in the hidingplace of his tent shall he hide me"; xxxi. 20, "Thou shalt hide them in the hidingplace of thy presence." So the Targ. here *in the shadow of Thy Presence* (lit. *Shechinah*).

5 For thou, O God, hast heard my vows:
Thou hast given *me* the heritage of those that fear thy name.
6 Thou wilt prolong the king's life:
And his years as many generations.

5—8. Such prayers David can offer in confidence, for his prayers have already been partially answered. He can look forward in faith to the fulfilment of the promises God has made to His king, and he will spend the rest of his life in grateful thanksgiving.

5. *hast heard my vows*] Vows accompanied by prayers.

thou hast given me *the heritage of those that fear thy name*] *Me* is not in the original; and it is best to supply the remoter object of the verb from the complement of the nearer object, and render with LXX, (Vulg.), Jer., P.B.V., **thou hast given (their) possession to them that fear thy name.** 'Possession' is the term regularly used of Israel's 'occupation' of the land of Canaan (Deut. ii. 19; iii. 18; &c.; Ps. xxxvii. 9, 11, 22, 29, 34). The collapse of Absalom's rebellion has restored the true and loyal Israelites, who shewed their fear of God's name by adhering to the king of His choice, to the possession of their rightful inheritance, from which they were in danger of being expelled.

It is best to regard the perfects not as 'perfects of confidence' that his prayers will surely be heard, but as referring to past experience. The insurrection has been crushed: but the king awaits restoration (*v.* 4).

6. *Thou wilt prolong the king's life*] Lit., *Thou wilt add days to the days of the king.* Cp. 2 Kings xx. 6. From speaking of the people (*v.* 5), David passes to speak of himself. His life had been in danger: but now the danger was over. At first sight the words may seem to be those of another, speaking of David, rather than those of David speaking of himself. But he thus uses the third person because he is speaking of himself in his capacity of king, referring to the promises made to the king as such. Cp. Jer. xxxviii. 5, where Zedekiah says, "The king is not he that can do anything against you"=I, though king, cannot &c.

and *his years*] R.V., **his years shall be as many generations.** This verse is not a prayer, and the text ought not to be altered to turn it into a prayer. It is a confident appeal to God's promise and purpose. The long life which was one of Jehovah's special blessings under the old covenant (Ex. xxiii. 26; 1 Kings iii. 11; Prov. iii. 2, and often), and which was a natural object of desire when the hope of a future life was all but a blank, was promised specially to the king (xxi. 4). The language is partly hyperbolical, like the salutation "Let the king live for ever" (1 Kings i. 31; Neh. ii. 3); partly it thinks of the king as living on in his descendants (2 Sam. vii. 13, 16, 29; Ps. lxxxix. 29, 36); but words which in their strict sense could apply to no human individual, become a prophecy of One greater than David; and thus the Targum here interprets 'king' by 'King Messiah.' See *Introd.* p. lviii ff; and Introd. to Ps. xxi.

He shall abide before God for ever: 7
O prepare mercy and truth, *which* may preserve him.
So will I sing *praise* unto thy name for ever, 8
That I may daily perform my vows.

7. *He shall abide before God for ever*] Rather, **He shall sit enthroned before God for ever**, an allusion to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, 'in the presence of God,' enjoying His favour and protection. See 2 Sam. vii. 16 (read with LXX *before me*), 26, 29; Ps. xxi. 6; lxxxix. 36 *b*: and for the pregnant sense of 'sit' cp. ix. 7.

O prepare &c.] **Appoint lovingkindness and truth that they may guard him.** Cp. xl. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 20; Ps. xlii. 8; lxxxix. 14. God's covenant love and faithfulness to His promise are like guardian angels to the king; and the reflection of these attributes of God in his own character and administration will be the safeguard of his throne (Prov. xx. 28).

The word *prepare* ('appoint') is ignored by some of the Ancient Versions (Jer. Aq. Symm.), and variously rendered by others. It is in itself suspicious both for its form and for its position, and perhaps should simply be omitted. Possibly it may be a corruption of the word for 'continually' (xl. 11), or of an emphatic *they* ('Lovingkindness and truth shall continually—or, even they shall—guard him'). Such a statement agrees better with *vv.* 6, 7 *a* than a prayer does.

8. The preservation of a life demands lifelong thanksgiving. Cp. l. 14. If David is the speaker in *vv.* 6, 7, the return to the first person in this resolution is entirely natural: otherwise the transition is harsh.

Very pathetic is the paraphrase of the Targum. "So will I pay my vows in the day of the redemption of Israel, even in the day when King Messiah is anointed to reign."

PSALM LXII.

When Saul was seeking David's life, Jonathan went to him secretly, and "strengthened his hand in God" (1 Sam. xxiii. 16); and when David's followers in a fit of blind exasperation threatened to stone him, he "strengthened himself in Jehovah his God" (1 Sam. xxx. 6). In the face of treacherous plots against his honour and perhaps his life, when his followers are in danger of being carried away by the power of position and wealth, this Psalmist "strengthens himself in God." With triumphant reiteration he dwells upon the thought of all that God is to him—his rock, his strong rock, his high tower, his refuge, his salvation, his hope; and with this trust in God he contrasts the folly of trusting to man and material resources, and the futility of opposing the will of God.

The trustful confidence and courage of the Psalm is worthy of David. If it is his, it may best be referred to the time of Absalom's rebellion.

It has affinities with Ps. iv, which seems to belong to that time. We might indeed have expected more definite allusions to the rebellion; but at any rate the situation of the Psalmist is not wholly dissimilar. Unscrupulous and hypocritical enemies are seeking to depose him from a position of dignity (3, 4); he has a party of followers to whom he can appeal (8), but some of them, in common with many others who are still wavering, are in danger of being seduced by the show of power and the fair promises of his enemies (cp. iv. 6).

Like Ps. xxxix, to which it has several points of resemblance, though the situation is wholly different, this Psalm has the name of Jeduthun in the title, but with a different preposition, which seems to mean **after the manner of Jeduthun** (R.V.), or possibly, set to some melody composed by or called after Jeduthun. Cp. the title of Ps. lxxvii. Jeduthun, who appears to have been also called Ethan (1 Chr. xv. 17 ff), is mentioned in 1 Chr. xvi. 41 f; xxv. 1 ff; 2 Chr. v. 12; xxxv. 15, along with Heman and Asaph, as one of the directors of the Temple music.

The structure of the Psalm is regular. It consists of three equal stanzas.

i. God alone is the Psalmist's defence. How long will his enemies plot to ruin him (1—4)?

ii. With slight but significant variations the opening verses are repeated, and those who are on the Psalmist's side are exhorted to trust in God (5—8).

iii. It is vain to trust in man and brute force and material wealth. God is a God of strength and love, which are manifested in the justice of His government (9—12).

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David.

62 Truly my soul waiteth upon God:
From him *cometh* my salvation.
2 He only *is* my rock and my salvation;

1—4. Patiently the Psalmist awaits God's help, and remonstrates with his enemies for their malice and hypocrisy.

1. *Truly*] The particle *ak* is characteristic of this Ps., in which it occurs six times, and of Ps. xxxix, in which it occurs four times. It stands at the beginning of *vv.* 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9. It may be affirmative, 'truly,' 'surely,' or restrictive, 'only.' Either sense will suit, and possibly the shade of meaning may not always be the same; but 'only' appears to be preferable throughout. Literally the line means: *Only unto God is my soul silence;* unto God alone does my soul look in patient calmness, waiting for the deliverance which will surely come, and can come from Him alone. For such 'silent' waiting cp. *v.* 5; xxxvii. 7; xxxix. 2; Lam. iii. 26.

2. The same titles *my rock, my salvation, my high tower*, are combined in xviii. 2. The title *Rock* is frequently used to symbolise the strength, faithfulness, and unchangeableness of Jehovah: here (cp. lxi. 2) with the special thought of an asylum in danger.

He is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. 3
How long will ye imagine mischief against a man?
Ye shall be slain all of you:
As a bowing wall *shall ye be, and as* a tottering fence. 4
They only consult to cast *him* down from his excellency:
They delight in lies:
They bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.
Selah.

I shall not be greatly moved] In other words, "though he may fall he shall not lie prostrate" (xxxvii. 24; cp. Prov. xxiv. 16).

3. *How long*] For the indignant remonstrance cp. iv. 2, noting also the connexion of that verse with *vv.* 4, 7, 9 of this Psalm. God is on his side; they cannot harm him; how long will they persist in the futile attempt?

will ye imagine mischief against a man?] This rendering, adopted from Jewish authorities by the scholars upon whom Coverdale largely relied, and passing on from him to the later versions, rests upon an impossible derivation. Render with R.V., following LXX and Vulg., **will ye set upon a man**. The corresponding Arabic word is said to be still used in Damascus in the sense of 'to intimidate,' 'to threaten with violence.'

ye shall be slain] This is the reading of R. Aaron ben Asher, a famous Jewish scholar of the 10th century, whose authority was generally followed in the West. But the reading of his rival, R. Moses ben Naphtali, which makes the verb active (the difference is one of vowel points only) suits the context better. Render with R.V., **that ye may slay him**, or better still, returning to the primary meaning of the verb in connexion with the metaphor of the next line,

Battering him, all of you,
Like a toppling wall, like a tottering fence.

The blows of calamity have already taken effect, and they are eager to complete his ruin. Wycliffe gives a graphic rendering of the Vulg.; 'a wal bowid, and a wal of stoon with out morter cast down.' "The metaphor of the falling wall is common in Eastern proverbs. 'The wall is bowing,' is said of a man at the point of death. 'By the oppression of the headman the people of that village are a ruined wall.'" (Aglen.)

all of you] In contrast to 'a man'; for though the Psalmist was not alone (*v.* 8) he was the principal object of attack. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 1 ff.

4. **Only to thrust him down from his dignity have they taken counsel, delighting in a lie:**
With his mouth doth each of them bless, but inwardly they curse.

Their plot is 'a lie,' false in its principle and in its aim (iv. 2, note); and they have been guilty of the grossest hypocrisy and duplicity in promoting it. Cp. xii. 2; xxviii. 3; lv. 21.

5 My soul, wait thou only upon God;
For my expectation *is* from him.
6 He only *is* my rock and my salvation:
He is my defence; I shall not be moved.
7 In God *is* my salvation and my glory:
The rock of my strength, *and* my refuge, *is* in God.
8 Trust in him at all times; ye people,
Pour out your heart before him:
God *is* a refuge for us. Selah.

9 Surely men of low degree *are* vanity, *and* men of high degree *are* a lie:

5—8. The opening verses are repeated, with slight variations, leading up to an exhortation to the Psalmist's sympathisers to trust in God.

5. Only unto God be thou silent, my soul,
For from him cometh my hope.

It is only by constant self-exhortation that the calmness of *v.* 1 can be maintained, especially when the recollection of his enemies' double-faced behaviour stirs his indignation. Cp. xxxvii. 7. 'My hope'='my salvation' (*v.* 1), the deliverance which I look for.

6. *my defence*] **My high tower**, as in *v.* 2.

I shall not be moved] Perhaps the omission of 'greatly' (*v.* 2) marks a growing faith.

7. *In God*] R.V., **With God**, lit. *upon God* (cp. vii. 10, note). It rests with God to deliver him and defend his honour;—his personal reputation and (if the speaker is David) his royal dignity. See iv. 2, note.

is *in God*] Or, *consists in God*, **is God** (*vv.* 6, 8). Cp. Is. xxvi. 4.

8. Render in accordance with the Massoretic punctuation, **Trust ye in him at all times, O people.** He exhorts his faint-hearted followers, who were in danger of being carried away by the show of power on Absalom's side. Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 2 ff for 'people' used of David's adherents. It is unnecessary to follow the LXX in reading, *Trust ye in him, O whole assembly of the people.*

pour out your heart] Give free vent to your anxieties: make them all known to God. Cp. xlii. 4.

9—12. Trust in God, I say, and not in man or in material force. God's strength and love are the guarantee for the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the righteous.

9. *Surely*] Lit., as before, *only*. **Nought but vanity are men, (nought but) a lie are great men.** Only a mere breath which vanishes, an imposture which deludes those who trust them, are all men, whatever may be their rank. For the phrases *bnē ādām*, *bnē īsh*, 'low' and 'high,' see xlix. 2. In iv. 2 Absalom's followers are termed *bnē īsh:* waverers would be influenced by seeing the number of leading men on his side. The same phrase *nought but vanity* is used in xxxix. 5,

To be laid in the balance, they *are* altogether *lighter* than vanity.
Trust not in oppression, 10
And become not vain in robbery:
If riches increase, set not *your* heart *upon them.*
God hath spoken once; 11
Twice have I heard this;
That power *belongeth* unto God.
Also unto thee, O Lord, *belongeth* mercy: 12
For thou renderest to *every* man according to his work.

11, to describe the transitoriness and unsubstantiality of man, but the point is wholly different.

to be laid in the balance &c.] **In the balances they will go up, they are altogether of vanity.** They spring from and consist of mere breath (Is. xli. 24): put them in the scale, it flies up, for they have no weight or substance. The rendering 'lighter *than vanity*' is possible but less probable.

10. The first two lines (cp. *vv.* 9 *a*, 11 *a*, *b*) are a rhythmical division of what is logically one sentence: 'put not vain trust in oppression and robbery.' Do not rely, for you will only be deceived, upon wealth and material resources amassed by violence and wrong, instead of trusting in God (*v.* 8). It is a warning against the old temptation to follow might rather than right. 'Oppression and robbery' are often coupled. See Lev. vi. 2, 4; Ezek. xxii. 29; and cp. Is. xxx. 12.

if riches increase &c.] Lit. **if riches grow, pay no regard.** The Psalmist addresses those who were in danger of being tempted to covet the power which wealth brings, no matter what might be the means used for obtaining it. There are indications that social discontent was a factor in the momentary success of Absalom's rebellion (iv. 6).

11, 12. Once, yea twice, i.e. repeatedly (Job xxxiii. 14; xl. 5) has God spoken and the Psalmist heard (lxxxv. 8) the double truth which supplies the answer to such temptations;

That strength belongeth unto God,
And that unto thee, O Lord, belongeth lovingkindness.

He has the power and He has the will; therefore those who fear Him have nothing to fear. This he emphatically declares to be a truth of revelation, which he has learnt himself from God. "Scit, potest, vult; quid est quod timeamus?"

The sense will be the same if we render, *One thing hath God spoken, two things there are that I have heard*, and compare for the form of the sentence the numerical proverbs, e.g. Prov. vi. 16 ff; xxx. 15 f.

for thou renderest &c.] The punishment of the wicked and the reward of the faithful attest God's power and love. See Rom. ii. 6 ff, where St Paul quotes the words and expands their meaning.

PSALM LXIII.

The faith which inspires the two preceding Psalms reaches its climax here. At a distance from the sanctuary and in peril of his life, the Psalmist throws himself upon God. What he longs for above all things is the sense of God's presence, as he realised it in the worship of the sanctuary (1, 2). In lifelong thanksgiving for God's love he will find his highest joy and satisfaction (3—5), spending whole nights in meditation upon Him as he recalls the greatness of His past mercies (6, 7). While he draws closer and closer to God, his enemies will be banished into the nether darkness (8, 9). While their corpses lie ignominiously exposed on the field of battle where they fell, he and those who are loyal to God and to him rejoice in God, and all factious opposition is silenced (10, 11).

The Psalm does not admit of clear division into stanzas. Thought follows thought out of the fulness of a loving heart, and the precise connexion of the clauses is often obscure.

Such a Psalm teaches, more effectually than any formal definition, what is meant by a Personal God—a God with Whom the soul can hold converse with the whole force and fervour of a loving devotion. Its lofty spirituality is such as few can reach. But the concluding verses of the Psalm seem to be on a lower level. "We pass all at once into a different atmosphere. We have come down, as it were, from the mount of holy aspirations, into the common everyday world, where human enemies are struggling, and human passions are strong. Yet this very transition, harsh as it is, gives us a wonderful sense of reality. In some respects, it brings the Psalm nearer to our own level. The man who has been pouring out the fervent affection of his heart towards God is no mystic or recluse, lost in ecstatic contemplation, but one who is fighting a battle with foes of flesh and blood, and who hopes to see their malice defeated, their power crushed, and their carcases left to be the prey of jackals in the wilderness" (Bp Perowne). It must be remembered too that the Psalmist felt strongly that his enemies were God's enemies, and looked for their discomfiture, not only as a visible proof of God's favour to himself, but as a manifest token that God had not withdrawn from the government of the world, and was surely, if slowly, establishing His Kingdom among men.

The author of this Psalm was a king, for unless it is of himself as king that he speaks in *v.* 11, it is difficult to understand the relation of the king's rejoicing to the destruction of the Psalmist's enemies (*vv.* 9, 10). He was apparently at a distance from the sanctuary, and was in danger from malicious enemies, whose destruction he looks for on the field of battle. The title ascribes it to David, "when he was in the wilderness of Judah." Since he is already king, it is not to his earlier wanderings (1 Sam. xxiii. 14 ff), but to his flight from Absalom, that this title must be intended to refer. The road to Jericho by which David left Jerusalem led through the northern part of the desert of Judah, and he halted at "the fords of the wilderness" before crossing the Jordan (2 Sam. xv. 23, 28). The graphic narrative in 2 Sam. refers more than once to the privations which the king had to suffer in his hasty flight (2 Sam. xvi. 2,

14; xvii. 29; cp. xvii. 2). The king and his followers were 'weary' in the 'weary land,' which supplied so apt a figure of his spiritual privations. The germ of the Psalm is to be found in the faith and resignation of David's words to Zadok, "Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of Jehovah, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation: but if he say thus, I have no delight in thee; behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him" (2 Sam. xv. 25 f). To part with the visible symbol of God's power and presence argued no common faith: it shewed that he was no slave to the common superstition, which regarded God's favour as tied to the Ark.

Much of the Psalm can certainly be explained from David's situation, and if the reference of the Psalm to David is abandoned, it is idle to speculate as to the author and his circumstances. But whoever he was, the spiritual power and beauty of *vv.* 1—8 remain the same. It is no wonder that the Psalm was adopted by the early Church as its morning Psalm (primarily on the ground of the LXX rendering of *v.* 1), as Ps. cxli was chosen for the evening Psalm. "The Fathers of the Church," says St Chrysostom, "appointed it to be said every morning, as a spiritual song and a medicine to blot out our sins; to kindle in us a desire of God; to raise our souls, and inflame them with a mighty fire of devotion; to make us overflow with goodness and love, and send us with such preparation to approach and appear before God." See Bingham's *Antiquities*, B. xiii. c. 10.

Comp. (beside Pss. lxi, lxii) Pss. xlii—xliii, the companion piece in the Korahite collection.

A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah.

O God, thou *art* my God; early will I seek thee: 63
My soul thirsteth for thee,
My flesh longeth for thee,

1, 2. Recalling the glorious visions of God which he has enjoyed in the sanctuary, the Psalmist thirsts for a renewed sense of His Presence.

1. *O God, thou* art *my God*] *Elohim, thou art my El.* He addresses Jehovah, for *Elohim* here is the substitute for that Name (cp. cxl. 6), as the Strong One to whom he can appeal with confidence in his need. Cp. xlii. 2, 8, 9; xliii. 4.

early will I seek thee] So the LXX, *πρός σε ὀρθρίζω* (the word used in Luke xxi. 38); and hence the use of the Psalm as a morning Psalm. Rather, however, **earnestly will I seek thee**; though sometimes (e.g. Is. xxvi. 9) the word seems to be used with allusion to the supposed derivation from *shachar*, 'dawn.'

my soul...my flesh] My whole self, soul and body. Cp. lxxxiv. 2, 'soul, heart, flesh': the emotions, the reason and the will, the physical organism in and through which they act.

thirsteth for thee] See xlii. 2, note; lxxxiv. 2.

longeth for thee] **Pineth for thee**, a strong word, occurring here only, meaning probably, 'faints with desire.'

In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;
2 To see thy power and thy glory,
So *as* I have seen thee in the sanctuary.
3 Because thy lovingkindness *is* better than life,
My lips shall praise thee.
4 Thus will I bless thee while I live:

in a dry and thirsty land] **In a dry and weary land** (Ps. cxliii. 6; Is. xxxii. 2). These words are certainly metaphorical, not literal: it is the 'water of life' for which he thirsts; the spiritual refreshment with which God revives the fainting soul. But the metaphor was naturally suggested by the circumstances in which David was situated.

2. The A.V. transposes the clauses of this verse in a way which cannot be justified. Render:

In such wise have I gazed upon thee in the sanctuary,
To see thy strength and thy glory.

In such wise ('so') is explained to refer to *v.* 1, meaning 'as my God,' or 'so fervently'; but this verse seems rather to give the ground and reason for the preceding verse:—I pine for communion with Thee, because I have had such glorious visions of Thy presence in the sanctuary. There he has 'gazed' upon God—the word is used of an intent and discerning contemplation, specially of things divine (xxvii. 4; xi. 7; xvii. 15), and of prophetic 'vision' (Is. i. 1)—in order to realise His Majesty as it is revealed to man. The Ark was the symbol of God's Presence, of His strength and glory (1 Sam. iv. 21; Ps. xxiv. 7, note; lxxviii. 61; cxxxii. 8); and all the ordinances of the sanctuary possessed for him a sacramental meaning. It was thus that Isaiah 'saw the Lord.'

3—5. The joy of grateful praise.

3. *Because thy lovingkindness* &c.] R.V. renders, *For thy lovingkindness* &c., a further reason for the longing of *v.* 1. But it is best to retain the rendering of the A.V. He has waited to see God's power and glory, yet after all it is the lovingkindness of which he has personal experience that tunes his lips to praise. When Moses desired to see God's *glory*, he was granted a revelation of His *goodness* (Ex. xxxiii. 18 ff). It is *better than life*, than that which men count most precious, for without it life would be a desert. His life was threatened, but the danger fades out of sight in the consciousness of God's love. Note the connexion of God's strength and lovingkindness (*vv.* 2, 3), as in lxii. 11, 12.

shall praise thee] **Shall laud thee,** a different word from that in *v.* 3. The word is supposed to be a proof of the late date of the Psalm, as it is an Aramaic word, and is found elsewhere only in the later parts of the O.T. But it is precarious to argue from a single word, when the remains of Heb. literature are so comparatively scanty.

4. *Thus*] **So,** as in *v.* 2: cp. lxi. 8: so fervently; in such a spirit of loving gratitude.

while I live] Cp. civ. 33; cxlvi. 2.

I will lift up my hands in thy name.
My soul shall be satisfied as *with* marrow and fatness; 5
And my mouth shall praise *thee with* joyful lips:
When I remember thee upon my bed, 6
And meditate on thee in the *night* watches.
Because thou hast been my help, 7
Therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.
My soul followeth hard after thee: 8
Thy right hand upholdeth me.
But those *that* seek my soul, to destroy *it*, 9

I will lift up my hands] The attitude of prayer (xxviii. 2; cxli. 2; 1 Tim. ii. 8), the outward symbol of an uplifted heart (xxv. 1).

in thy name] Relying upon all that Thou hast revealed Thyself to be. Cp. xliv. 5; John xiv. 13, &c.

5. God feeds the hungry soul with rich and bountiful food (Deut. xxxii. 14; Ps. xxii. 26; xxiii. 5; xxxvi. 8; Is. xxv. 6; lv. 2; Jer. xxxi. 14). Though the language may be derived from the sacrificial feasts, it is indifferent to strict ritual precision, for the fat (A.V. here *marrow*) was never to be eaten, but was to be burnt on the altar as God's portion (Lev. iii. 16, 17).

6, 7. Thankful recollection of past mercies.

6. The A.V. connects this verse with *v.* 5, but the absence of *and* in the second clause makes it preferable to connect it with *v.* 7, thus:

When I remember thee upon my bed,
I meditate on thee in the night watches:
For thou hast been my help,
And in the shadow of thy wings will I shout for joy.

When once he calls God to mind as he lies down to rest, he is so engrossed with the thought of His love that he meditates on it all night long—*per singulas vigilias* (Jer.). The night was divided into three watches by the Israelites (Lam. ii. 19; Jud. vii. 19; 1 Sam. xi. 11); the division into four watches referred to in the N.T. was of Roman origin.

8, 9. While he draws ever closer to God, his enemies will be destroyed.

8. *followeth hard after thee*] Lit., *cleaves after thee;* cleaves to God (Deut. x. 20 &c.) and follows Him (Hos. vi. 3). *Hard*='close.' Cp. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, i. 2. 179, "Indeed my lord, it followed hard upon."

thy right hand &c.] Cp. xvii. 7; xviii. 35; xli. 12; Is. xli. 10. Man's effort is met by God's care (Phil. ii. 13).

9. *But those* &c.] *They*, his enemies, who are seeking his life, are emphatically contrasted with himself (lix. 15; lvi. 6). While his path is upward to God, theirs is downward to the depths of Sheol. It is possible to render (cp. R.V. marg.) *But they shall be destroyed that seek my life, They shall go* &c.

Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.
10 They shall fall by the sword:
They shall be a portion for foxes.
11 But the king shall rejoice in God;
Every one that sweareth by him shall glory:
But the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped.

into the lower parts of the earth] Into Sheol, swallowed up like Korah and his company of rebels. Cp. for the phrase, Is. xliv. 23; Ezek. xxvi. 20; Ps. lxxxvi. 13; Eph. iv. 9; Deut. xxxii. 22: and for the thought, Ps. ix. 15, 17; lv. 15, 23.

10, 11. While his enemies come to an ignominious end, the king emerges from the struggle, triumphant over all opposition.

10. *They shall fall* &c.] Lit., **They shall give him over** (lit. *pour him out*) **to the power of the sword** (Jer. xviii. 21; Ezek. xxxv. 5). The active verb with indefinite subject is practically equivalent to a passive, 'He shall be given over'; yet the idiom suggests the idea of mysterious agents, God's ministers of justice, whose office it is. Cp. Luke xii. 20, R.V. marg. The object of the verb is in the singular, either individualising the king's enemies ('each one of them'), or treating them as one body; but hardly singling out the leader. Cp. lxiv. 8, note.

a portion for foxes] Rather, **jackals.** "It is the jackal rather than the fox which preys on dead bodies, and which assembles in troops on the battle-fields, to feast on the slain." Tristram, *Nat. Hist.*, p. 110. Their corpses will lie unburied where they fall, to be devoured ignominiously by wild beasts, instead of receiving honourable sepulture. Cp. Is. xviii. 6; Jer. xix. 7.

11. *But the king*] The connexion is unintelligible unless the king is identified with the Psalmist, whose enemies are destroyed. Cp. lxi. 6 ff.

that sweareth by him] Grammatically 'him' may refer to the king or to God, but usage decides that God is meant. Cp. Deut. vi. 13; x. 20; Is. lxv. 16. Those who invoke His Name as the attestation of their oaths are His loyal worshippers; they share the triumph of the king who is His representative.

but the mouth &c.] **For the mouth** &c. Those who 'speak lies' are those who rebel against God and His king, deluding men by false promises to join an undertaking which is false in its principle and aim. See iv. 2, note; lxii. 4. They are all completely silenced.

Cp. the similar ending of Ps. lxiv. St Paul may have had the phrase in mind in Rom. iii. 19. The context shews how familiar the Psalms were to him.

PSALM LXIV.

The theme of this Psalm is God's judgement upon the enemies of the righteous. It falls into two main divisions, in each of which the verses are arranged in pairs.

i. The Psalmist confidently appeals to God for protection against the secret plots and open attacks of evil-doers (1, 2), who are bent on ruining innocent men by slander and intrigue (3, 4), and flattering themselves that they have nothing to fear, prosecute their designs with an evil inventiveness and determination (5, 6).

ii. But surely and suddenly the arrow of God's judgement will pierce them, and their plots will recoil upon themselves, to the scorn of all beholders (7, 8). In their fate men will recognise the hand of God, and the righteous will rejoice in this proof of His providence (9, 10).

Thus the Psalmist's present and personal need is merged in the larger question of the punishment of the persecutors of the righteous; and the certainty of their punishment as the consequence of their sin is proclaimed in a tone of prophetic authority. The Ps. has its distinctive peculiarities, though numerous parallels of thought and language are to be found in other Psalms. Cp. especially v, vii, x, xi, xii, xiv, xxxvi, lii, lv, lvii, lviii.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David.

Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: 64 1
Preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; 2
From the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
Who whet their tongue like a sword, 3
And bend *their bows to shoot* their arrows, *even* bitter words:

1—6. Prayer for preservation from malicious enemies, who are plotting against the Psalmist with subtle treachery and resolute determination.

1. *in my prayer*] R.V., **in my complaint.** Cp. lv. 2, 17; 1 Sam. i. 16.

preserve &c.] **From the enemy's terror**—the alarm which he excites—**thou wilt guard my life** (xii. 7; lxi. 7). The common rendering of the verbs in this and the following line as imperatives ('preserve' 'hide'), though legitimate, seems to miss the shade of meaning intended by the change from the imperative 'hear.' From petition the Psalmist passes at once to the language of confident anticipation, such as we find in xvi. 10 f.

2. Thou wilt hide me from the secret council of evil doers,
From the tumultuous throng of workers of iniquity.

i.e. from secret machinations and open attack. The cognate verbs are used together in ii. 1, 2 (*tumultuously assemble*, R.V. marg.; *take counsel*). Cp. xxxi. 13. The same words occur in lv. 14, but in a good sense.

3. *Who whet*] R.V., **who have whet.** For the comparison see lv. 21; lvii. 4; lix. 7.

and *bend* &c.] Render, **They have aimed as their arrow a bitter scheme.** For the peculiar phrase see lviii. 7. *Dābār* seems to mean *scheme* as in *v.* 5, rather than *speech*, or *words*. So the LXX πρᾶγμα

4 That *they* may shoot in secret at the perfect:
Suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
5 They encourage themselves *in* an evil matter:
They commune of laying snares privily;
They say, Who shall see them?
6 They search out iniquities;
They accomplish a diligent search:
Both the inward *thought* of every one *of them*, and the heart, *is* deep.

πικρόν. *Bitter*=hurtful or venomous. Is the idea that of a poisoned arrow? The Targ. paraphrases, "They have anointed their arrows with deadly and bitter venom."

4. *That* they *may shoot*] Cp. **xi. 2.**

in secret] R.V., **in secret places,** as x. 8; xvii. 12.

the perfect] The upright, blameless man, an epithet often applied to Job (i. 1, &c.). Cp. xxxvii. 37; Prov. xxix. 10, and see note on the cognate word in Ps. xv. 2.

fear not] They neither fear God nor regard man. Cp. lv. 19.

5. *They encourage* &c.] Lit., *They make strong for themselves an evil scheme*, sparing no pains to make their plot successful.

they say] Lit. *they have said*, i.e. to themselves; they have made up their minds that there is no retributive Providence in the world. This is the reason of their unrestrained wickedness.

Who shall see them?] An indirect form of speech in place of the direct *Who will see us?* More exactly the Heb. means, *Who will see to them?* They have persuaded themselves that there is no God who will take any account of their proceedings. Cp. x. 11, 13; xii. 4; lix. 7; Is. xxix. 15, &c.

6. They plan deeds of iniquity; We have perfected (say they) a consummate plan;
And each man's innermost thought and heart is deep.

The form of the verb is anomalous, and it is uncertain whether it is meant for the first person, or, as A.V. takes it, the third person, 'they accomplish.' The first person is however more graphic and forcible. For a similar abrupt introduction of the persons spoken of as speakers, see lix. 7. The various reading *they have hidden* is improbable. They conceal their thoughts deep in their own hearts, but in vain! God explores the lowest depths and most tortuous labyrinths of the human heart (Jer. xvii. 9, 10). Cp. with this and the preceding verse Is. xxix. 15, "Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from Jehovah, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" and the sarcastic words of Mic. vii. 3, "Both hands are set to that which is evil to do it well."

7—10. They may scheme, but in the midst of their schemes the arrow of divine judgement pierces them: by this exhibition of God's justice all men are warned, and the righteous are encouraged.

But God shall shoot at them *with* an arrow; 7
Suddenly shall they be wounded.
So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon them- 8
selves:
All that see them shall flee away.
And all men shall fear, 9
And shall declare the work of God;

7. Therefore God shoots at them with an arrow;
Suddenly are they smitten.

The peculiar idiom of the Heb. in this and the following verses conveys the idea that this judgement is the immediate consequence of their conduct, and though still future, is as certain as though it were already historical fact. Lit. *So God hath shot...they have been wounded...and they have been made to stumble...and all men have feared, and they have declared...and understood &c.*: Note the parallelism of this verse to *v.* 4, They aim their arrows at the righteous, unseen, as they fancy, by man, and unregarded by God; but swift retribution overtakes them unawares. Cp. vii. 12 ff. R.V. follows the Massoretic accents in attaching *with an arrow* to the second line; but the balance of the clauses is in favour of dividing the verses as A.V. does, and the parallel with *v.* 4 is more striking if 'suddenly' occupies the same emphatic position at the beginning of the second line as there. Note how their punishment is described in terms of their crime (*vv.* 4, 5).

8. *So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves*] An untenable rendering of an obscure sentence. It is best to render, substantially as R.V., **And they are made to stumble, their own tongue being against them.** Lit. *they make him stumble:* the plural subject to the verb suggesting, as in lxiii. 10, the idea of mysterious agents in God's service, and the singular object regarding 'the enemy' (as in *v.* 1 *b*) collectively as a body. For the sense cp. cxl. 9; vii. 15 f (note that *vv.* 12 f are parallel to *v.* 7 here); lvii. 6. Their tongue, the weapon with which they sought to destroy others, is turned against themselves. Ahithophel's fate may serve for illustration. Possible, but less satisfactory, is the rendering of R.V. marg.: *So shall they against whom their tongue was make them to stumble.* The context does not hint that their victims become their executioners.

shall flee away] For fear of sharing their fate (Num. xvi. 34). But the right rendering certainly is, **All that see their desire upon them shall wag the head**, in scornful triumph, as Jer. xlviii. 27, R.V.; cp. Ps. xxii. 7. See lii. 6 ff.; liv. 7; lix. 10, and for the light in which such expressions of satisfaction are to be regarded see note on lviii. 11.

9. *all men*] Upon men in general (cp. lviii. 11) this judgement produces an impression of wholesome fear, in contrast to the profane fearlessness of the ungodly (*v.* 4).

And they declare the work of God,
And understand his operation:

publicly acknowledging that He rules in the world, and interpreting for

For they shall wisely consider of his doing.
10 The righteous shall be glad in the LORD, and shall trust in him;
And all the upright in heart shall glory.

themselves the meaning of the judgement. For 'work,' 'operation,' cp. xxviii. 5; for 'understand,' cvi. 7; and generally, Hos. xiv. 9.

The P.B.V. *all men that see it* presumes a slightly different and inferior reading.

10. For *the righteous* and *the upright in heart*—the Psalmist and those whom he represents—the judgement is an occasion of joy, supplying a fresh proof that Jehovah governs the world righteously and that in Him they have a sure refuge. Cp. v. 11; lii. 6 ff; lviii. 10 f; lxiii. 11.

and shall trust in him] Rather, **take refuge in him** (lvii. 1; lxi. 4).

the upright in heart] Cp. xi. 2, already quoted as a parallel to *v.* 4.

PSALM LXV.

A hymn of praise, intended probably to be sung at the presentation of the firstfruits at the Passover (Lev. xxiii. 10—14) in a year of exceptional promise. It is clear from the allusions to the gathering of the people to the Temple (*vv.* 2, 4) that it was composed for use at one of the great festivals, and as the corn was still in the fields (*v.* 13) the later festivals of Pentecost or Harvest and Tabernacles or Ingathering are excluded.

Was the Psalm written for any special occasion? Not only does the poet see before him the promise of a more than ordinarily bountiful harvest, but the recollection of a great national deliverance seems to be fresh in his mind (*vv.* 5 ff). Accordingly Delitzsch thinks that the spring of the third year foretold by Isaiah (xxxvii. 30), when the retreat of the Assyrians had left the Israelites once more free to till their fields in peace, offers the most appropriate historical basis for the Psalm. This view gains support from the coincidences of thought and language with Ps. xlvi, which belongs to that time, and with Isaiah, as well as from the general similarity of the Ps. to Ps. lxvi, which there are good reasons for connecting with the deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians.

The Psalm consists of three nearly equal stanzas.

i. It is meet that a grateful people should gather in the Temple to offer their praises to the Hearer of prayer to whom all mankind may have access. Sin indeed unfits them to approach God, but He Himself will make atonement for them. In the blessings of His house they will find their highest happiness (1—4).

ii. Israel's God is the one true trust of all mankind. He created and sustains the world; and He controls the nations in it as He controls its natural forces. The signs of His power inspire universal awe and joy (5—8).

iii. And now in particular Israel has to acknowledge God's loving bounty in the rich abundance with which He has blessed the year (9—13).

Some MSS. of the LXX and the Vulg. contain the curious addition to the title; 'a song of Jeremiah and Ezekiel and the people of the captivity (lit. sojourning) when they were about to set forth,' but it does not appear to have been part of the original LXX.

This and the three following Psalms bear the double title *Song* and *Psalm*. Cp. xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi, &c. *Song* is the older term for a hymn intended to be sung in public worship. Cp. Is. xxx. 29; Am. viii. 3.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *and* Song of David.

Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Zion: 65
And unto thee shall the vow be performed.
O thou that hearest prayer, 2
Unto thee shall all flesh come.

1—4. It is the duty of a grateful people to render thanks to God in the Temple, assembling to pay its vows to the universal Hearer of prayer. The consciousness of manifold sins might deter them from approaching a holy God, were not He Himself graciously ready to purge their guilt away. In the blessings, of which the welcome to His house is the pledge, is to be found man's truest happiness.

1. *Praise waiteth for thee*] The phrase beautifully suggests the idea of a grateful people, assembled to render thanks to God, and only waiting for the festival to begin. But this can hardly be the meaning of the original. The renderings, *For thee praise is silent*, or, *silence is praise*, give no appropriate meaning, for though prayer may be silent (lxii. 1), praise calls for vocal expression. The R.V. marg., *There shall be silence before thee* and *praise, O God*, involves a harsh asyndeton. It remains to follow the LXX (πρέπει, Vulg. *te decet hymnus*), which preserves a slightly different tradition as to the vocalisation of the Hebrew, and to render, **Praise beseemeth thee, O God, in Zion.**

the vow] Or, collectively, **vows**. Cp. lxvi. 13; and for vows and praises coupled together see xxii. 25; lxi. 8. At the end of the verse P.B.V. adds *in Jerusalem*, from the LXX (most MSS. though not the Vatican) and Vulg., completing the parallelism, as in cii. 21; cxlvii. 12.

2. *O thou that hearest prayer*] God is thus addressed, because He has given His people cause for the present thanksgiving by hearing their prayers. But the words are more than a reference to a particular answer to prayer. They proclaim that it is His inalienable attribute, His 'nature and property,' to hear and answer prayer.

unto thee shall all flesh come] At first sight the context seems to limit 'all flesh' to Israel, contemplated in its weakness and frailty as needing the strength of God (Joel ii. 28). But it seems more consonant to the spirit of this and the two following Psalms to take it in the wider sense of all mankind. Already the Psalmist beholds the Temple becoming a house of prayer for all nations (Mark xi. 17). It is no

3 Iniquities prevail against me:
As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.
4 Blessed *is the man whom* thou choosest,
And causest to approach *unto thee, that* he may dwell *in* thy courts:
We shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house,
Even of thy holy temple.

larger hope than was entertained by Isaiah and Micah (Is. ii. 2 ff; Mic. iv. 1 ff) if not by some earlier prophet whom they both quote. Cp. Jer. xvi. 19; Is. xlv. 24; lxvi. 23; Ps. xxii. 27; lxxxvi. 9.

3. *Iniquities*] Lit., *words*, or, *matters of iniquities*: many various items of iniquity. Cp. for the same idiom cv. 27, cxlv. 5. Virtually the clause is a protasis to the second line:

Though manifold iniquities are too strong for me,
As for our transgressions, Thou wilt purge them away.

In the singular 'me' we may hear the voice of the Psalmist himself, or of some representative of the nation, the king or high-priest, who, like Daniel or Nehemiah, confesses his own sin as well as the sin of his people (Dan. ix. 20; Neh. i. 6: cp. Heb. v. 3, vii. 27): but more probably it is the assembled congregation which speaks of itself first as an individual ('against *me*'), then as an aggregate of individuals ('*our* transgressions'). For a similar change from sing. to plur. cp. Num. xxi. 22, and many other passages. Its sins are an enemy which it cannot defeat (Gen. iv. 7; cp. Ps. xxxviii. 4; cxxx. 3; cxliii. 2); yet God who "forgives iniquity and transgression and sin" will purge away their transgressions. THOU is emphatic. He, and He alone, can do it. The word for *purge away* is that commonly rendered 'make atonement for' (whether its primary meaning is 'to blot out' or 'to cover' is disputed), and it would be natural to see in it an allusion to the Day of Atonement which immediately preceded the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev. xxiii. 27, 34), and to suppose that the Ps. was intended for use at that Festival, did not *v.* 13 speak of the corn as still standing in the fields.

4. *Blessed* &c.] Or, **Happy is he whom thou choosest**, as in i. 1; &c. The language is that which is used of the priests who were 'chosen,' and 'brought near' to God (Num. xvi. 5; cp. Jer. xxx. 21; Zech. iii. 7). Here however it is not limited to the sons of Aaron, but applied to all the nation as 'a kingdom of priests' (Ex. xix. 6). They are God's guests in His house, members of the 'household of God.' The visit to the Temple was for the devout Israelite a sacrament of his membership in God's household, and the sacred feasts symbolised the spiritual blessings prepared by God for His people in fellowship with Him. Cp. xv. 1; xxiii. 5f; xxvii. 4f; xxxvi. 8; lxiii. 5.

we shall be satisfied] Or, **O let us be satisfied.** Cp. xvii. 15; xxii. 26; lxiii. 5.

even *of thy holy Temple*] Better, as R.V., **the holy place of thy temple.** See xlvi. 4; and cp. lxiii. 2.

By terrible *things* in righteousness wilt thou answer us, 5
O God of our salvation;
Who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of
them that are afar off *upon* the sea:
Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; 6
Being girded with power:
Which stilleth the noise of the seas, 7
The noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

5—8. In the future, as in the past, God will prove His righteousness by awe-inspiring acts on behalf of His people in answer to their prayers, for He has created and sustains the universe, and controls the forces alike of nature and of the nations.

5. By *terrible* things &c.] The R.V. gives a better order: **By terrible things thou wilt answer us in righteousness.** As God Himself is 'a terrible God' (xlvii. 2; lxxvi. 7 ff), so His acts are 'terrible,' inspiring His enemies with dread, and His people with reverent awe. The epithet is often applied to the mighty works of the Exodus (Deut. x. 21; 2 Sam. vii. 23; Is. lxiv. 3; Ps. cvi. 22; cxlv. 6); here to all similar deliverances, granted in answer to prayer. 'Righteousness' is the principle of the divine government; and it is closely related to 'salvation'; for by it God's honour is pledged to answer prayer and deliver His people. Cp. xlviii. 10; Is. xli. 10; xlv. 8, 21; li. 5; &c.

who art *the confidence of all the ends of the earth*] R.V. (cp. P.B.V.), **thou that art the confidence** &c. This may mean that He is the object of their unconscious trust, although they know Him not, because it is He who provides for their wants and rules their destinies (lxvii. 4; Amos ix. 7; Acts xvii. 23 ff); but the further thought is certainly included that His mighty deeds on behalf of His people in destroying their tyrannical oppressors will lead all the oppressed and needy throughout the world to turn to Him with a conscious trust. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 13.

and of them that are afar off upon *the sea*] Better, **and of the sea afar off.** A slight change of text would give the phrase of Is. lxvi. 19, *the isles*, or *coastlands, afar off*. But the change is unnecessary; land and sea naturally stand for the entire world.

6. *setteth fast the mountains*] The mountains poetically represent the strongest and most solid parts of the earth (xviii. 7; xlvi. 2 f). These He has created and sustains. Comp. the appeals of Amos to the phenomena of nature as the evidence of God's power, iv. 13; v. 8; ix. 5, 6.

being *girded with power*] **Girding himself with might.** Cp. xciii. 1.

7. Who stilleth the roaring of the seas,
The roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples.

He controls alike the turbulent elements of nature (Jer. v. 22), and the tumultuous hosts of the nations which they symbolise. Cp. xlvi. 2 f, 6; Is. xvii. 12—14.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at
thy tokens:
Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to
rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it:
Thou greatly enrichest it
With the river of God, *which* is full *of* water:
Thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided
for it.

10 *Thou* waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: *thou* settlest
the furrows thereof:
Thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the spring-
ing thereof.

8. *They also* &c.] Better, **So that they who dwell in the ends of the earth are afraid at thy signs.** These mighty works impress them with awe, as 'signs' of the irresistible power of God.

the outgoings of the morning and evening] The term *outgoings* which strictly speaking is appropriate to the east only (xix. 5 f.) is applied, by a kind of zeugma, to the west also. From the furthest east to the furthest west He makes earth with all its inhabitants **to shout for joy** (v. 11; lxvii. 4). Awe gives place to triumph as they watch the downfall of their tyrants and welcome the establishment of God's kingdom of peace (xlvi. 9 f), and all nature sympathises with them.

9—13. The special object of the Psalm—thanksgiving for the plenty of the year. First, grateful acknowledgment that the rains which have fertilised the soil were God's gift; then a charming picture of a joyous landscape rich with promise.

9. Thou hast visited the land, and made it plentiful, greatly enriching it:
The stream of God is full of water;
Thou preparest their corn, for so thou preparest it.

The A.V. *visitest* turns the special thanksgiving into a general statement. The rendering *waterest* follows the Ancient Versions, which may however have read the word differently. The use of the verb in Joel ii. 24, iii. 13, points to the meaning *made it overflow, made it plentiful.* God's 'stream' (i. 3) is the rain, with which He irrigates the land as out of a brimming aqueduct (Deut. xi. 11; Job xxxviii. 25), providing corn for men by preparing the earth, as the next verse goes on to describe:

10. Saturating its furrows, levelling its ridges:
Thou softenest it with showers, thou blessest its springing growth.

The poet looks back upon the 'early rain' of autumn and winter (Nov.—Feb.), which had prepared the ground for the seed and fostered

Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; 11
And thy paths drop fatness.
They drop *upon* the pastures of the wilderness: 12
And the little hills rejoice on every side.
The pastures are clothed with flocks; 13
The valleys also are covered over with corn;
They shout for joy, they also sing.

its growth. It had been abundant, and now (*vv.* 11 ff) he gazes upon crops of unusual promise ripening for the harvest.

11. *Thou crownest* &c.] **Thou hast crowned the year of thy goodness**, added fresh beauty and perfection to a year already marked by special bounty, *and thy paths drop fatness*, rich blessings fall as Thou traversest the land, an allusion probably to an unusually copious fall of the 'latter rain,' which was more uncertain than the early rain, and was most anxiously looked for as a special blessing (Job xxix. 23; Prov. xvi. 15; Jer. iii. 3; Zech. x. 1).

P.B.V. *clouds* (Great Bible, not Coverdale, who has *fotesteppes*) seems to be intended as an explanation of *paths*. Cp. Nah. i. 3.

12. *the pastures of the wilderness*] Jer. ix. 10; xxiii. 10; Joel i. 19, 20; ii. 22. 'Wilderness' denotes the open uncultivated country used for pasturage, in contrast to the cultivated land or 'field.'

and the little hills &c.] R.V., **And the hills are girded with joy.** For the personification of nature cp. xcvi. 11 ff; Is. xliv. 23; &c.

13. **The meadows are clothed with sheep;**
And the vales are decked with wheat;
They shout for joy, yea sing.

With the last line cp. Is. lv. 12. *The vales* (Heb. *'ēmek*) denote "the long broad sweeps sometimes found between parallel ranges of hills" (*Sinai and Pal.*, p. 481) which were the natural cornfields of Palestine (1 Sam. vi. 13). The graphic touch of the Heb., which represents the pastures and vales as shouting *one to another*, can hardly be preserved in translation.

PSALM LXVI.

Another Psalm of thanksgiving, probably intended, like Ps. lxv, for use at the Passover, but evidently owing its origin to special circumstances which called for more than ordinary rejoicings. It consists of two parts, distinguished by the use of the first person plural (1—12) and the first person singular (13—20) respectively; and it contains five stanzas of nearly equal length, marked off (except where the division is obvious at the end of the first part and of the whole) by *Selah*.

i. 1. All the inhabitants of the world are summoned to praise God and acknowledge His sovereignty (1—4).

2. They are bidden to contemplate His mighty works on behalf of His people in the past, and to recognise that His sovereignty is still exercised in the government of the world (5—7).

3. They are invited to praise God for His recent deliverance of His people from a calamity which had threatened to prove their ruin (8—12).

ii. 1. The people's representative enters the Temple to pay the vows which he had made in the hour of distress (13—15).

2. He invites all who fear God to listen to his grateful acknowledgement of God's answer to his prayer, and concludes with an ascription of praise to God for His goodness (16—20).

The reader is at once struck by the abrupt change from the first person plural in *vv.* 1—12 to the first person singular in *vv.* 13—20. How is it to be accounted for, and who is the speaker in *vv.* 13 ff?

(1) Some critics have supposed that portions of two Psalms, the one national, the other personal, have been combined. But would not the incongruity, if it exists, have been felt by the compiler? and the similarity of the situation (*vv.* 9 ff, 14 ff), and of the style (*vv.* 5, 8, 16) in both parts is strongly in favour of the unity of the Psalm.

(2) In spite of the personal turn of the language in *vv.* 13 ff, it might be the congregation assembled for worship which lifts up its voice as one man in that consciousness of national solidarity which was so vivid a reality to the mind of ancient Israel.

(3) But this view does not account for the *transition* from the plural to the singular; and it seems best to hear in these verses the voice of the responsible and representative leader of the nation (not necessarily himself the author of the Psalm), who identifies its fortunes and interests with his own.

Who then was this leader and what was the occasion? The language of *vv.* 9 ff clearly refers to some wonderful interposition by which God had delivered the nation from a danger which threatened its very existence. Was it the termination of the Assyrian tyranny by the destruction of Sennacherib's army? or was it the restoration from the Babylonian captivity? If it was the latter, the Psalm must be placed after B.C. 516, for the Temple is standing, and sacrificial worship is being carried on. But there is no distinct reference to the Exile; the language points to a short and sharp crisis rather than to a prolonged humiliation; and the whole Psalm admits of a far more satisfactory explanation in connexion with the earlier occasion. (*a*) The Assyrian oppression was certainly sufficiently severe, and the danger to Judah sufficiently great, to justify the language of *vv.* 9 ff. It must have seemed as though Jerusalem's last hour was come, and the Southern Kingdom must inevitably share the fate of the Northern Kingdom. (*b*) A distinctive feature of the Psalm is the appeal to the nations to recognise Jehovah as the ruler of the world. In just such a spirit Hezekiah prays for deliverance from Sennacherib "that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD, even thou only" (Is. xxxvii. 20); and in God's name Isaiah bids those who are afar off to hear what He has done and those who are near to acknowledge His might (xxxiii. 13). (*c*) The parallel obviously suggested between the Exodus and the recent deliverance might seem to point to the Return from Babylon which is so often spoken of as a second Exodus: but the parallel between the Egyptian oppression and the Assyrian oppression is

constantly present to Isaiah's mind (x. 24, &c.), and he expressly compares the rejoicings with which the deliverance will be celebrated to the rejoicings of the Passover (xxx. 29). (*d*) The Psalm contains some striking parallels of thought and language with Is. i, and with Pss. xlvi, xlviii, lxxv, lxxvi, which belong to that time.

If then the Psalm is a song for the Passover festival, celebrating the deliverance of Jerusalem from the tyranny of the Assyrians and the menaces of Sennacherib, the speaker in *vv.* 13 ff (though not necessarily the composer of the Psalm) will be Hezekiah. This may explain the personal, and yet more than personal, character of the language. He speaks as the representative and mouthpiece of the nation in its trial and deliverance; and in *vv.* 16 ff not without allusion to his own restoration from sickness, which was to him a type and pledge of the nation's escape from death (Is. xxxviii. 5 ff). His prayer in his sickness (Is. xxxviii. 3) presents a striking parallel to the profession of integrity in *v.* 18.

This Psalm and Ps. lxvii are the only anonymous Psalms which have *For the Chief Musician* prefixed. It is doubly described as *A Song, a Psalm*, or perhaps *A Song for Music*. The LXX adds ἀναστάσεως, *of resurrection*, probably with reference to *vv.* 9, 16.

To the chief Musician, A Song *or* Psalm.

Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: 66
Sing forth the honour of his name: 2
Make his praise glorious.
Say unto God, How terrible *art thou in* thy works! 3
Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee.

1—4. All the earth is summoned to worship God and acknowledge the greatness of His power.

1. *Make a joyful noise*] Or, as the word is rendered in xlvii. 1, **shout**: greet Him with the acclamations which befit a victorious king.

all ye lands] Lit. as R.V., **all the earth**, as in *v.* 4.

2. *Sing forth the honour of his name*] Or, **Hymn forth the glory of his name**: celebrate in a joyous psalm this fresh revelation of His character.

make his praise glorious] Or, perhaps, *ascribe glory to praise him.*

3. *How terrible* art thou in *thy works!*] Better as R.V., **How terrible are thy works!** Cp. lxv. 5; Rev. xv. 3.

through the greatness of thy power] Rather, **of thy strength**; cp. xlvi. 1; lxiii. 2; lxviii. 33, 34.

submit themselves unto thee] Or, **come cringing unto thee.** The word, which means literally *to lie* (hence P.B.V. *be found liars unto thee*) and so *to yield feigned obedience*, denotes the unwilling homage paid by the conquered to their conqueror. Cp. xviii. 44; lxxxi. 15; Deut. xxxiii. 29.

4 All the earth shall worship thee,
And shall sing unto thee; they shall sing *to* thy name.
Selah.
5 Come and see the works of God:
He is terrible *in his* doing toward the children of men.
6 He turned the sea into dry *land:*
They went through the flood on foot:
There did we rejoice in him.

4. All the earth shall worship thee and hymn thee,
Yea, hymn thy name.

This verse is part of the address to God put into the mouth of the nations.

5—7. The nations are invited to contemplate God's mighty works for His people in the past, and to learn that the sovereignty to which they bear witness is eternal and universal.

5. *Come and see the works of God*] Cp. xlvi. 8, the only other place where the word for *works* is found.

he is *terrible* in his *doing toward the children of men*] The preposition *toward* implies supremacy *over* mankind. All men must fear Him (lxiv. 9); but it depends on themselves whether they will reverence Him as their God, or must dread Him as an enemy.

6. The passage of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan are referred to as the most notable of His terrible acts (lxv. 5). Cp. lxxiv. 13; lxxviii. 13; &c. *Flood*, as in Josh. xxiv. 2, 3, 14, 15, is an archaism for **river** (R.V.).

there did we rejoice in him] At the Red Sea and the Jordan. The Psalmist can thus identify himself and his contemporaries with the Israelites of ancient time, for he regards the nation as possessing an unbroken continuity of life. This rendering is grammatically justifiable, and it suits the context better than the alternative of R.V. marg., *there let us rejoice in him*, whether this is understood to mean, "*There*—on the spot where those old historical events occurred,—there let us take our stand, and renew our praise to Him, our wondrous Benefactor" (Kay); or, "*There*, pointing as it were to the field in which God had made bare His arm, and where the past history had been repeated in the present, *there* let us rejoice in Him" (Perowne). For the Psalmist is addressing the nations, not his countrymen, and a historical reference to the rejoicing which took place after the passage of the Red Sea is more natural than an invitation to join in celebrating either that or the recent deliverance. Moreover mention of the recent deliverance appears to be reserved for the next stanza, to which *v.* 7 forms the appropriate transition. Bp. Perowne's explanation would at any rate require the adoption of the LXX reading, 'who turneth the sea into dry land, they go through the river on foot'; i.e. He is ever doing as He did at the Red Sea and the Jordan, opening ways of escape for His people.

He ruleth by his power for ever;
His eyes behold the nations:
Let not the rebellious exalt themselves. Selah.
O bless our God, ye people, 8
And make the voice of his praise to be heard:
Which holdeth our soul in life, 9
And suffereth not our feet to be moved.
For thou, O God, hast proved us: 10
Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.
Thou broughtest us into the net; 11

7. *by his power*] **By his might** (R.V.), as lxv. 6.

for ever] What is true for the past is true for the present and the future. God's sovereignty is eternal. Cp. cxlv. 13; Jer. x. 10.

his eyes behold the nations] Better, as R.V. renders the word in Prov. xv. 3, **keep watch upon.** He is the world's watchman, sleeplessly on the watch lest any foe should injure Israel. Cp. xxxiii. 10, 13 ff; Is. xxvii. 3; and Hezekiah's prayer (Is. xxxvii. 17), "open thine eyes, O LORD, and see."

let not the rebellious exalt themselves] A warning to those who obstinately resist God's will (lxviii. 6, 18) to humble themselves (ii. 10 f), rather than a prayer to God to humble them (ix. 19). Cp. God's reproof of Sennacherib by Isaiah (xxxvii. 23), "Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice and lifted up thine eyes on high?"

8—12. A renewed call to the nations to praise God for His deliverance of Israel from dangers which menaced the very existence of the nation.

8. *ye people*] **Ye peoples** (R.V.). The nations, not Israel, are still addressed. Conscious of Israel's mission to the world, the Psalmist can call upon them to give thanks for Israel's preservation to fulfil its work for them.

9. Who hath set our soul in life,
And not suffered our foot to be moved.

The nation was on the point of death and ruin, but God preserved and upheld it. The tenses indicate that the words are not the statement of a general truth (as A.V. renders them), but refer particularly to the deliverance from the trial described in the following verses.

10. *proved us...tried us*] Words used of testing precious metals, and smelting away the dross (xvii. 3; xxvi. 2; Prov. xvii. 3; Jer. ix. 7; Zech. xiii. 9; Mal. iii. 2, 3). God had declared His intention of smelting out the dross from His people by the Assyrian troubles (Is. i. 25).

11. *Thou broughtest us into the net*] God had deliberately brought them into the power of their enemies, to punish them for their sins. Cp. for the figure Job xix. 6. Some commentators render *into the dungeon*, a figure for the loss of freedom (Is. xlii. 22), but the usage of the word is not in favour of this rendering.

Thou laidst affliction upon our loins.
12 Thou hast caused men to ride over our heads;
We went through fire and through water:
But thou broughtest us out into a wealthy *place.*

13 I will go *into* thy house with burnt offerings:
I will pay thee my vows,
14 Which my lips have uttered,
And my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble.
15 I will offer unto thee burnt sacrifices of fatlings,
With the incense of rams;

thou laidst &c.] **Thou layedst a crushing load upon our loins,** bowing us down under its weight.

12. Better: **Thou didst cause...we went...but thou hast brought us out.** The figure in the first line is clearly that of the vanquished flung down upon the ground, and trampled remorselessly under the horsehoofs or crushed by the chariot wheels of their conquerors. Cp. Is. li. 23. Representations of a conqueror driving his chariot over prostrate foes may be seen on Egyptian and Assyrian monuments. The sense of outrage is heightened by the word for *men*, which means *mortal men*. Cp. ix. 19; x. 18; lvi. 1. *Fire and water* are symbolical of extreme and varied dangers. Cp. Is. xliii. 2.

into a wealthy place] Lit., *into abundance*, the opposite of the privations we endured. But the Ancient Versions point to a different and more suitable reading, **a place of liberty.** Cp. xviii. 19; cxix. 45.

13—15. The people's leader and representative enters the Temple to pay the vows which he made in the hour of national distress.

13. *I will go*] R.V. **I will come,** the usual word for approaching God in the sanctuary (v. 7; xlii. 2; xliii. 4; lxv. 2; &c.). The transition from the plural in *vv.* 1—12 ('we,' 'us,' 'our') to the singular is more naturally explained by supposing that the king comes forward to speak as the representative of the people than by supposing that the congregation speaks as an individual. He comes with 'burnt offerings,' expressing the devotion of the worshipper to God, and 'peace offerings' in fulfilment of his vows (lxv. 1; cp. Lev. xxii. 21).

14. Wherewith my lips opened,
And which my mouth spake, when I was in distress.

For the first line cp. Judg. xi. 35 f; but there is no reason to suppose that rash vows are here meant.

15. Burnt offerings of fatlings will I offer unto thee,
Together with incense of rams.

'Incense of rams' denotes the sweet savour of the sacrifice ascending as it was consumed by fire. Cp. perhaps, though the meaning is not certain, Is. i. 13. The cognate verb is used of burning the victim or the fat of the victim on the altar. Thus Ex. xxix. 18, "and thou shalt

I will offer bullocks with goats. Selah.
Come *and* hear, all ye that fear God, 16
And I will declare what he hath done for my soul.
I cried unto him *with* my mouth, 17
And *he was* extolled with my tongue.
If I regard iniquity in my heart, 18
The Lord will not hear *me:*
But verily God hath heard *me;* 19
He hath attended to the voice of my prayer.

burn (lit., if an obsolete verb might be revived, *incense*) the whole ram upon the altar; it is a burnt offering unto the LORD: it is a sweet savour." According to the Levitical ritual the ram was to be offered as a burnt offering or peace offering only by the whole people or its princes, by the high-priest or an ordinary priest, or by a Nazirite; never by an ordinary individual (by whom however it was to be used as a trespass offering). *He-goats* are only mentioned in connexion with the offerings of the princes (Num. vii. 17 ff). Hence it may be inferred that the Psalm refers to sacrifices offered by the nation or its leaders, not by an ordinary private individual. Cp. however Is. i. 11, where almost exactly the same animals are mentioned as here; and Ps. l. 9, 13.

I will offer] Lit., *dress* for sacrifice. Cp. 1 Kings xviii. 23 ff; Ex. xxix. 36 ff; &c.: and Gr. ἑρδειν, ῥέζειν, in LXX ποιεῖν: Lat. *facere*.

16—20. All who fear God are bidden to hear what He has done for the speaker. He had prayed in expectation of a favourable hearing, knowing that sincerity is the necessary condition of prayer; and the answer to his prayer had attested his sincerity. In conclusion he blesses God for this continuance of His lovingkindness.

16. *all ye that fear God*] The whole drift of the Ps., especially *vv.* 1, 5, 8, is in favour of extending the phrase to include all who fear God wherever they are to be found, whether Israelites, or non-Israelites who have been won to worship Him by the sight of His works, rather than of limiting it to Israel, or an inner circle of the faithful in Israel.

what he hath done for my soul] **What he did** for me when my very life was in danger. If Hezekiah is the speaker, he may be thinking at once of his own life (Is. xxxviii. 17) and of the life of the nation whose representative he was. He had prayed for both (Is. xxxvii. 15 ff; xxxviii. 2); and the preservation of the one was a pledge of the preservation of the other (Is. xxxviii. 6).

17. *and* he was *extolled with my tongue*] Better as R.V. marg., **and high praise** (cxlix. 6) **was under my tongue.** Even while he prayed, he had praises ready, so sure was he of an answer. Cp. x. 7, though (see note) the idea there may be different.

18, 19. If I regarded iniquity in my heart,
The Lord would not hear:
But verily God hath heard.

20 Blessed *be* God, which hath not turned away my prayer,
Nor his mercy from me.

Hypocrisy disqualifies the suppliant, but he is confident that he is no hypocrite, and the answer to his prayer justifies him. There is no self-righteousness in this, but the simplicity of "a conscience void of offence toward God and men." Cp. Hezekiah's plea, Is. xxxviii. 3; and Ps. xvii. 1 ff; xviii. 20 ff; Job xvi. 17; Is. i. 15; lix. 2, 3; 1 John iii. 21; &c.; and Is. i. 13 (R.V.), "I cannot away with iniquity and the solemn meeting"; i.e. tolerate the union of religious observances and iniquitous conduct.

20. *Blessed be God*] Cp. xxviii. 6; xxxi. 21; lxviii. 19, 35.

nor his mercy from me] *From me* must belong to this clause only. It is forced to explain 'who has not removed my prayer and His loving-kindness from me' to mean 'who has not deprived me of the power to pray or of the blessing of an answer'; in spite of the beauty of St Augustine's comment: "Cum videris non a te amotam deprecationem tuam, securus esto, quia non est a te amota misericordia eius." Possibly a verb, such as Coverdale (P.B.V.) supplies for the sake of the rhythm, has been lost; so that the clause would read, **nor withdrawn his loving-kindness from me.**

PSALM LXVII.

Another bright and joyous song, evidently intended for use in the Temple worship, perhaps, like the two last, at the Passover, but more probably, as the harvest seems to have been gathered in (*v.* 6), at the Feast of Pentecost (Harvest), or Feast of Tabernacles (Ingathering).

It consists of three stanzas of four, five, and six lines respectively. The second and third have an initial refrain.

i. In words borrowed from the ancient priestly benediction the assembled people pray for God's blessing, that all the world may learn the character of His providential dealings with men (1, 2).

ii. O that all nations might join in worshipping God, and rejoice in the establishment of His kingdom upon earth (3, 4)!

iii. Yea surely, they will join in His worship. He has granted Israel an abundant harvest; He does bless them and will continue to bless them, and so all nations will be won to acknowledge Him as their God (5, 7).

The Psalm may be connected in origin as well as in purpose with the two preceding Psalms. Like them it is not merely a thanksgiving for a plentiful harvest, but is evidently inspired by the recollection of some great deliverance calculated to make a deep impression upon the nations, which might be regarded as the pledge if not the commencement of the visible divine rule of righteousness upon the earth. Now the destruction of Sennacherib's army, with which we have seen reason to connect the two last Psalms, was just such an event: and we know that the prophets of the time expected the establishment of the Messianic kingdom to

follow immediately upon the removal of the Assyrian tyranny. See e.g. Is. x. 33—xi. 9; Mic. v. 2 ff.

As in Ps. lxvi God's providential care for Israel in some great national crisis, so here His goodness towards His people exemplified in the recent bountiful harvest, is urged as an argument to win the nations to His service. Disaster and defeat, drought and scarcity, put Israel to shame before the nations (Joel ii. 17, 19); deliverance from danger and domestic prosperity were an evidence to the nations of the true character of Israel's God. The Psalm is inspired by the consciousness of Israel's mission to the world as the 'Messianic nation,' the instrument for the establishment of God's universal kingdom: it is a prayer for the accomplishment of that mission.

The O.T. prayer for the extension of God's salvation to all the nations is very appropriately appointed for use as an alternative Canticle to the Nunc Dimittis,—the thanksgiving for the Saviour through Whom that hope is to be realised. It is moreover commonly used at Afternoon Service in the ritual of the Sephardic Jews.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song.

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; 67
And cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.
That thy way may be known upon earth, 2

The title may be rendered, **For the Chief Musician; on stringed instruments. A Psalm, a Song.** See *Introd.* pp. xxii, xviii.

1, 2. The final object of the blessing for which Israel prays is that the whole world may know God.

1. The Psalm begins with words taken from the priestly blessing of Num. vi. 24 ff:

"Jehovah bless thee and keep thee:
Jehovah cause his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee:
Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace:"

as the following Ps. begins with the invocation used when the Ark started on a journey, Num. x. 35. Other echoes of the priestly blessing may be found in iv. 6; xxix. 11; xxxi. 16; lxxx. 3, 7, 19.

God be merciful] Rather, as in Num. vi. 25, **be gracious unto us.** *God* is substituted for the original *Jehovah* according to the usual practice of the editor of the 'Elohistic' collection of Psalms.

upon us] Lit. **with us.** For the simple preposition of the original (*unto* or *upon*) the Psalmist substitutes one which suggests the thought of God's gracious favour *abiding with* His people. Cp. "The blessing of God Almighty...be amongst you and remain with you always."

Selah (if it is in its right place) marks a musical interlude following upon and emphasising this echo of the priestly benediction. But it may have been accidentally transferred from the close of *v.* 2.

2. Lit. *that men may know thy way in the earth.* The blessings

Thy saving health among all nations.
3 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
4 O let the nations be glad and sing for joy:
For thou shalt judge the people righteously,
And govern the nations upon earth. Selah.
5 Let the people praise thee, O God;
Let all the people praise thee.
6 *Then* shall the earth yield her increase;
And God, *even* our own God, shall bless us.

which God bestows upon Israel will shew the nations what a God He is, and make them desire to serve Him. Cp. Jer. xxxiii. 9; Zech. viii. 20 ff; Is. xi. 9. God's *way* is His gracious method of dealing with men, explained in the next line as His *saving health*, i.e. *salvation*, as the word is generally translated. *Health* in old English meant healing power, deliverance, salvation. Cp. xlii. 11.

3, 4. May all nations soon acknowledge the God of Israel as their God!

3. Let the peoples give thanks unto thee, O God;
Let all the peoples give thanks unto thee.

The A.V. *people* is misleading. It is not Israel that is meant, but all the peoples of the earth. Cp. cxvii. 1 f.

4. The reason for the universal rejoicing of the nations is given in the words, **for thou shalt judge the peoples with equity**; i.e. rule them with just and equitable government. Cp. the attributes of the true king as God's representative, Is. xi. 3 f; Ps. lxxii. 12 ff. *Judge* does not here mean *punish*, but *govern*.

govern] Or, **lead**, a word often applied to God's leading of Israel through the wilderness (lxxviii. 14). All nations are under His providential guidance, not Israel only, His specially chosen flock. Cp. Am. ix. 7.

5—7. The special occasion of the Psalm in the present bountiful harvest.

5. *the people*] As before, **the peoples**. This refrain is generally treated as before as a wish or prayer; but it is worth considering whether the tone of the last stanza does not change throughout from prayer to confident hope, so that we should render, *The peoples shall give thanks unto thee, O God*. The form of a refrain is often slightly varied, why not its *tone?* The ambiguity arises from the fact that Heb. (with some exceptions) does not possess separate forms for the future and the optative.

6. Then *shall the earth* &c.] Render, **The land hath yielded her increase**, according to the promise of Lev. xxvi. 4; cp. Ps. lxxxv. 12; lxv. 9 ff. *God, our God*, is the Elohistic editor's substitution for *Jehovah our God*.

God shall bless us;
And all the ends of the earth shall fear him. 7

shall bless us] Here and in the following verse the verbs might be taken as a prayer: *may God bless us*. But it is better to render *doth* or *shall bless us*. Pointing to the abundant harvest (*v.* 6 *a*), the thankful people declare that God is blessing them, and express their faith that He will continue to bless them, with the result that the remotest nations of the world will become 'fearers of God,' worshippers of the only true God, the God of Israel (lxvi. 16).

PSALM LXVIII.

The theme of this magnificent Psalm is the march of God to victory. It traces the establishment of His kingdom in Israel in the past; it looks forward to the defeat of all opposition in the future, until all the kingdoms of the world own the God of Israel as their Lord and pay Him homage.

Every conceivable occasion and date have been suggested for this Psalm, from the age of Joshua to that of the Maccabees. Those who accept the title, and maintain the Davidic authorship, or at any rate the Davidic date, are by no means agreed as to the particular period of David's reign to which it should be referred. Some suppose it to have been written for the translation of the ark to Zion (2 Sam. vi): others, for the triumphal procession of thanksgiving for some victory; while others again regard it as celebrating David's victories in general, with retrospective allusion to the translation of the Ark, and prospective anticipation of the building of the Temple. Others have connected it with the translation of the Ark to Solomon's Temple. Others find an appropriate occasion for it in the victory of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram over Moab, or in the repulse of the Assyrians in the reign of Hezekiah. Others place it in the closing years of the Babylonian Exile, and others after the Return from Babylon, at a date decidedly later than the time of Nehemiah. Others think that it was written during the wars between Egypt and Syria for the possession of Palestine towards the close of the third century B.C.; and others place it later still, connecting it with the war between Ptolemy Philometor and Alexander Balas, B.C. 146 (1 Macc. xi).

The obvious inference from this wide variety of opinion is that the data are really insufficient for forming a definite conclusion. It is impossible to speak positively; but the grounds for assigning it to the same period as Is. xl—lxvi, i.e. the last decade of the Babylonian exile, seem so far to preponderate, and the circumstances of that time appear so far to give the best background for the explanation of the Psalm as a whole, that this view has been provisionally adopted as the basis of the present commentary. The following are the chief grounds for it.

(1) *Language* is no doubt a precarious criterion; but there are features in the Psalm which point to a late rather than an early date. Thus e.g. the word for *prosperity* (*v.* 6) is derived from a root found only

in late books (Esth. Eccl.), though common in Aramaic: the nearest parallel to the word for *parched land* (*v.* 6) is in Ezekiel; the word for *scatter* (*v.* 30) is not the ordinary Heb. word, but half Aramaic in form.

(2) *The literary affinities* of the Psalm point decidedly in the same direction. Not only is it dependent on the Blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii)[1] and the Song of Deborah (Judg. v)[2], but it contains parallels with Is. xl—lxvi which seem to indicate either that the writer was acquainted with those prophecies, or else that his language had been formed in the same atmosphere of thought and hope. Thus e.g. the summons of *v.* 4, "Cast up a highway for him that rideth through the deserts" at once reminds us of Is. xl. 3, "Make straight in the desert a highway for our God"; and the very same word "cast up a highway" is used in Is. lvii. 14; lxii. 10, and nowhere else in this sense. With *v.* 6 compare Is. xlii. 7; xlix. 9; lxi. 1; and with *v.* 31 cp. Is. xlv. 14. There are also parallels with the Prayer of Habakkuk[3], but they are not in themselves such as to prove that the Psalmist was indebted to it.

On the other hand the dependence of the Psalm on Is. xxiv—xxvii (probably to be dated after the Return from Babylon, perhaps about B.C. 500—480), which is maintained by some commentators, certainly cannot be proved.

(3) Clear and definite *historical references* are wanting; but many of the allusions can best be explained from the circumstances of the closing years of the Exile.

(1) The opening verses in each of the main divisions of the Psalm (1—3; 19—23) seem to contemplate an approaching manifestation of God's power on behalf of His people which will bring salvation and joy to them, shame and destruction to their enemies, and appear to point (cp. *vv.* 5, 6, 20) to the present need of such an interposition. The same juxtaposition of Redemption and Judgement is prominent in Is. xl—lxvi.

(2) The characteristic attributes of God in *vv.* 4—6 no doubt include a reference to the Exodus from Egypt and the settlement in Canaan; but the parallels already quoted from Is. xl ff give good ground for thinking that the Exodus from Babylon and the resettlement of Israel in Canaan were also in the Psalmist's mind.

(3) *Vv.* 7—18 are a historical retrospect; and there is nothing to shew that the poet was contemporary with the point to which he carries it. If he wrote in view of the approaching return of God to His ancient dwelling-place, His original entry into it was a natural point to which to bring down his survey.

(4) It has been maintained that *vv.* 24—27 are the description of an actual procession which the Psalmist himself has witnessed, and that the mention of Zebulun and Naphtali along with Judah and Benjamin carries the Psalm back to a date before the separation of the kingdoms.

[1] Cp. *v.* 4 with Judg. v. 3; *vv.* 7, 8 with Judg. v. 4, 5; *v.* 12 with Judg. v. 30; *v.* 13 with Judg. v. 16; *v.* 18 with Judg. v. 12; *v.* 27 with Judg. v. 14, 18.

[2] Cp. *v.* 17 with Deut. xxxiii. 2; *vv.* 19, 20 with Deut. xxxii. 29; *v.* 26 with Deut. xxxiii. 28; *vv.* 4, 33, 34 with Deut. xxxiii. 26, 27.

[3] Cp. *v.* 7 with Hab. iii. 12, 13; *v.* 10 with Hab. iii. 14; *v.* 21 with Hab. iii. 13, 14.

But, as will be shewn in the notes, the connexion of thought points rather to an occasion beyond the deliverance spoken of in *vv.* 19—23 as still future; in other words to an ideal procession which rises before the poet's imagination as the celebration of the great triumph over Israel's enemies to which he looks forward; and if this is the case, the mention of Northern as well as Southern tribes as taking part in it can be best explained as the anticipation of the fulfilment of the numerous prophecies which predict the reunion of Israel and Judah.

(5) *V.* 29 does not necessarily presuppose the existence of the Temple. It may look forward to its restoration, just as, on the hypothesis of the Davidic date, it must look forward to its erection. The importance of the Temple to the age of the Restoration is a prominent thought in Haggai and Zechariah; and its significance in relation to the nations appears from Is. lx, &c.

(6) The reference to Egypt in *v.* 30 is too obscure to be made the ground of argument. There probably, as in *v.* 31, Egypt is mentioned as the typical enemy of Israel. At any rate it gives no support to the Davidic date. There is no hint that Israel was in any way threatened by Egypt during the reign of David.

It has been argued that the triumphant tone of the Psalm furnishes a conclusive refutation of the hypothesis that it was composed during the Exile. But if the approaching Return was the occasion of some of the grandest prophecies in the O.T., it cannot be impossible that it should also have been the occasion of one of the grandest Psalms in the Psalter. In appearance and to the outward eye the Return from Babylon was a "day of small things": in reality and to the eye of faith it was one of the most momentous crises in the history of the Chosen People, nay, of the world, comparable only to the Exodus. For if the Exodus from Egypt was the birthday of the nation of Israel, the Exodus from Babylon was the birthday of the Jewish Church. The parallel between the first and the second Exodus is constantly present to the mind of the prophets. This poet-seer looks away from the actual circumstances which surround him to the true meaning and the ultimate issues of that new march of God through the deserts which he is about to witness, and he sees the analogy and the guarantee for it in the past history of the nation. There are parts of Is. xl—lxvi (e.g. ch. lx) which betray no trace of weakness or misgiving. Why may not the age which could produce such a prophecy have produced such a Psalm? At least the occasion was worthy of a Psalm which has been well described as "the most buoyant, the most powerful, the most animated, which is to be found in the Psalter."

Whatever may have been its origin and date, the grandeur of the Psalm remains the same, and its inspired and inspiring assurance of the certainty of the final triumph of God and the universal recognition of His sovereignty is unaltered. It has always been the favourite Psalm of those who felt (whether rightly or wrongly) that their cause was the cause of God, and that in His strength they were sure to conquer. To the crusaders setting out for the recovery of the Holy Land; to Savonarola and his monks as they marched to the 'trial of fire' in the Piazza at Florence; to the Huguenots who called it "the song of

battles"; to Cromwell at Dunbar as the sun rose on the mists of the morning and he charged Leslie's army; it has supplied words for the expression of their heartfelt convictions.

The choice of the Psalm for use in the service of the Synagogue at Pentecost was doubtless determined by the allusion in *vv.* 7, 8[1] to the giving of the Law at Sinai, which is commemorated at that Festival. Its selection as a Proper Psalm for Whitsunday was probably suggested partly by the Jewish usage, partly by St Paul's application of *v.* 18 to the spiritual gifts bestowed by the risen and ascended Christ upon the Church. But the appropriateness does not depend upon a single verse. No Psalm could be fitter for the "birthday of the universal Church" than the Psalm which celebrates the triumphs of God in the history of His people, and looks forward to the extension of His kingdom throughout the world.

It is most truly a Messianic Psalm; for though it contains no direct prophecy of Christ's coming, it is full of the thought of the presence and dwelling of God among His people, which is most fully realised in the Incarnation; and it is animated by the consciousness that all God's mighty works for Israel were but the means to a higher end, the spiritual conquest of the world, and the universal establishment of His kingdom.

The following is an outline of the contents of the Psalm, which consists of a prelude, and two main divisions, which may be subdivided into stanzas of 3, 4, and 5 verses.

i. The Prelude (1—6).

1. God is about to manifest His presence and power to the discomfiture of His foes and the joy of His people (1—3).
2. The Psalmist calls upon his countrymen to welcome the advent of their God and prepare the way for it; bidding them remember what He is—the helper of the helpless and oppressed, the liberator of the captive (4—6).

ii. A survey of Israel's history in proof of God's victorious power and gracious love (7—18).

1. The Exodus from Egypt and the Entry into the Promised Land. His majesty was manifested at Sinai, His goodness in the preparation of Canaan to be the home of the long-oppressed Israelites (7—10).
2. The conquest. He gave them victory over the mighty kings of Canaan (11—14).
3. The choice of Zion. He chose Zion for His earthly abode, and returned to heaven as a triumphant conqueror, having received the submission and homage of men (15—18).

iii. From the past the Psalmist turns to the present and the future (19—35).

1. God is an ever-present Saviour of His people: He will take vengeance on their enemies (19—23).

[1] The Targum introduces references to the giving of the Law in several other passages: *e.g. v.* 11, "The Lord gave the words of the Law to the people": *v.* 15, "Mount Sinai was chosen for the giving of the Law": *v.* 18, see note.

2. Once more the victory of God will be celebrated by a reunited Israel (24—27).
3. The Psalmist prays that God will display His power and subdue all opposition, and sees the nations hastening to pay Him homage (28—31).
4. All nations are summoned to join in the praise of Israel's God, and the Psalm closes with their confession of His gracious sovereignty (32—35).

To the chief Musician, A Psalm *or* Song of David

68 Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered:
Let them also that hate him flee before him.
2 As smoke is driven away, *so* drive *them* away:
As wax melteth before the fire,
So let the wicked perish at the presence of God.
3 But let the righteous be glad; let them rejoice before God:

1—3. The advent of God brings terror and destruction to His enemies, blessing and joy to His people.

1. **God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered,**
And they that hate him shall flee from his presence.

Ps. lxvii begins with an echo of the priestly blessing of Num. vi. 24 ff, and the opening words of Ps. lxviii are based upon the prayer or watch-word used when the Ark, the symbol of the Divine Presence in the midst of Israel, set forward on its journeys in the wilderness (Num. x. 35). But the Psalmist translates the prayer of Moses

"Arise, Jehovah, and let thine enemies be scattered,
And let them that hate thee flee from thy presence,"

into a positive expression of confident assurance that God is about to arise and manifest His power on behalf of His people. Most versions ancient and modern (except the Genevan, which has the future throughout *vv.* 1—3) render *Let God arise*; but the form of the verb is against this rendering, and if the words had been meant as a prayer, it would have been more natural to retain the direct invocation of the original.

before him] Better, **from his presence** (lit. *face*) as in *vv.* 2, 8; and so also in *vv.* 3, 4.

2. The verbs should be rendered as in *v.* 1 by futures: **As smoke ...so shalt thou drive them away: as wax...so shall the wicked perish at the presence of God.** The smoke scattered by the wind is an apt emblem for total disappearance (xxxvii. 20; Hos. xiii. 3); the wax melted by the fire for unresisting impotence (xcvii. 5; Mic. i. 4). "At the blast of the breath of Jehovah" the wicked vanish, leaving no trace behind; the consuming fire of His wrath they are powerless to withstand.

3. **But the righteous shall be glad, shall exult at the presence of God;**
Yea, they shall rejoice with gladness.

Yea, let them exceedingly rejoice.
4 Sing unto God, sing *praises to* his name:
Extol him that rideth upon the heavens
By his name JAH, and rejoice before him.

The righteous are the people of God, viewed in the light of their calling: *the wicked* are the heathen, regarded in the light of their general antagonism to God and His people. Cp. Hab. i. 13. In the contrast between Israel and the heathen the unrighteousness of many in Israel fades out of sight. The A.V. rendering *before* in this verse and *v.* 4 fails to bring out the significant contrast with *vv.* 1, 2. The Presence which brings dismay and destruction to the wicked, brings joy and blessing to the righteous. Cp. lxvii. 1; Ex. xxxiii. 14; Is. lxiii. 9; 2 Thess. i. 9, 10.

4—6. God's people are summoned to welcome Him and prepare the way for His coming: He is the champion of the weak and defenceless, the liberator of the captive.

4. to *his name*] Praising Him for all that He has revealed Himself to be. Cp. xliv. 8; Ex. iii. 15.

extol &c.] Render,

Cast up a high way for him that rideth through the deserts;
His name is JAH; and exult ye at his presence.

God's advent is described under the figure of the progress of an Oriental monarch, for whose chariot pioneers prepare the road. In almost identical words the prophet calls to the exiles in Babylon (Is. xl. 3),

> "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the LORD,
> Make straight in the desert a high way for our God:"

and in Is. lvii. 14, lxii. 10 the same word *cast up a high way* is used of preparing for the return of Israel from Babylon. God's people must prepare a way for Him by the removal of the obstacles of unbelief and faintheartedness and ungodliness which hinder Him from coming to deliver them.

The renderings of A.V. *Extol...upon the heavens* are derived from Jewish sources. The Targ. renders "Extol him that sitteth upon the throne of his glory in *Arābōth*," which is explained by comparison of *v.* 33 to mean the seventh or uppermost heaven. See Talm. *Chagigah* 12 *b* (Streane's transl. p. 65). The curious addition *as it were upon an horse* in P.B.V. (Great Bible, but not Coverdale) appears to come from Münster's Latin Version (1534—5) *veluti equo insidet.*

JAH is a shortened form of *Jehovah* (Jahveh), chosen here perhaps with allusion to its use in Ex. xv. 2 (upon which are based Is. xii. 2, Ps. cxviii. 4), to recall the memories of the Exodus. It is peculiar to poetry, and outside the book of Psalms, where it occurs most frequently in the familiar *Hallelujah* = 'Praise ye Jah,' it is found only in Ex. xv. 2, xvii. 16; Is. xii. 2, xxvi. 4, xxxviii. 11.

A curious mistake is to be found in the older editions of the Prayer

A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, 5
Is God in his holy habitation.
God setteth the solitary in families: 6
He bringeth out those which are bound with chains:
But the rebellious dwell *in* a dry *land.*

Book, until about 1750:—"Praise him in his name: yea, and rejoice before him." The Great Bible of 1539 has, "Prayse ye him in his name Ia and reioyse before hym"; but the edition of Nov. 1540 and others have: "Prayse hym in hys name: yea, and reioyce before hym." It appears to be simply a typographical error.

5. The orphan and the widow are typical examples of the friendless and unprotected who are under God's special guardianship (Ps. x. 14; cxlvi. 9; Hos. xiv. 3). They are the subjects of a special clause in the earliest legislation (Ex. xxii. 22 ff.), which is reechoed by the latest of the prophets (Mal. iii. 5). Cp. Is. i. 17, 23.

his holy habitation] Not the temple but heaven, whence He 'looks down' to bless His people (Deut. xxvi. 15), and rules the world, espousing the cause of the humblest, whom men are most prone to despise. For the phrase cp. Jer. xxv. 30; Zech. ii. 13; 2 Chr. xxx. 27. In Is. lxiii. 15 a different Heb. word is used.

6. God maketh the solitary to dwell in a house;
He bringeth out prisoners into prosperity;
But the stubborn dwell in a parched land.

The verse describes general principles of God's dealings with men, yet with special allusion to the establishment of Israel in Canaan, to their liberation from the bondage of Egypt, and to the fate of the rebels in the wilderness: and again, if the Ps. is rightly placed in the Exile, to the second Exodus from Babylon, and the reestablishment of the Israelites in their ancient home, while the faithless and rebellious part of the people will be left in the dreary and inhospitable heathen land, unwatered by the streams of divine grace (lxiii. 1). *Rebellious* or *stubborn* has been understood by some to refer to the heathen, but the usage of the word (which is applied to the '*stubborn* and rebellious son' in Deut. xxi. 18, 20) suggests rather that refractory Israelites are meant, as in lxxviii. 8. Stubborn rebellion against Jehovah's will was characteristic of the whole course of Israel's history; and it is hinted not obscurely that as of old the rebels perished in the wilderness instead of entering Canaan, so now the murmurers in Babylon, of whom it is plain from Is. xl—lxvi (e.g. lxv. 2) that there were many, will be left there to their fate. The *solitary* or *desolate* (xxv. 16) are the homeless and friendless. Cp. Is. lviii. 7; and (though the word is different) Lam. i. 1.

7—18. After this general introduction the Psalmist proceeds to review the past history of Israel in proof of God's victorious power and of His gracious love towards His people.

7 O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people,
When thou didst march through the wilderness; Selah.
8 The earth shook, the heavens also dropped
At the presence of God: *even* Sinai itself *was moved*
At the presence of God, the God of Israel.
9 Thou, O God, didst send a plentiful rain,

7—10. The Exodus from Egypt and the Entry into Canaan.

7, 8. These verses are borrowed, with some omissions and alterations, from the Song of Deborah (Judg. v. 4, 5):

"Jehovah, when thou wentest forth out of Seir,
When thou didst march out of the field of Edom,
The earth trembled, the heavens also dropped,
Yea, the clouds dropped water;
The mountains quaked at the presence of God,
Even yon Sinai at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel."

When God brought Israel out of Egypt, He "went before them... to lead them in the way" (Ex. xiii. 21 f.; cp. Mic. ii. 13), and in the great Theophany of Sinai the mystery and marvel of His self-revelation were concentrated. Earthquake and storm are the symbols of His Presence and Power. See Ex. xix. 16 ff., and cp. Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; Hab. iii. 3 ff.

Three times in this Psalm (7, 19, 32) *Selah* occurs not at the close of a stanza, but after the first verse of a stanza. If the text is right, it would seem that a musical interlude was employed to enforce the thought with which the stanza begins.

8. *shook*] R.V. **trembled.**

dropped] Torrents of rain accompanied the thunders and lightnings. Cp. lxxvii. 17 f.

at the presence of God] Cp. *vv.* 1, 2, 3, 4.

even *Sinai itself* was moved] R.V., **Even yon Sinai (trembled).** The words *yon Sinai* come in somewhat abruptly here, while in Judges they follow quite naturally upon the clause "the mountains quaked." A verb however can be supplied from the first line, and there is no need to alter the text.

the God of Israel] The use of this title here is significant. It was from Sinai that the covenant-relation between Jehovah and His people dated. Cp. Ex. xxiv. 8, 10.

9. *Thou, O God, didst send* &c.] Or, **dost send,** a general truth, illustrated by God's dealings with Israel. The verse is explained by many to refer to the manna and the quails which God 'rained down' upon the Israelites (Ex. xvi. 4; Ps. lxxviii. 24, 27); or generally, to all the gifts and blessings which He bestowed upon them in the wilderness. But 'dwelt' in *v.* 10 (though the word is sometimes used of the temporary sojourn in the wilderness, e.g. Num. xxv. 1; Deut. i. 46) is most naturally understood of the settlement in Canaan, and the antecedent to 'therein' must be 'thine inheritance,' i.e. the promised land, which is called God's inheritance in Ex. xv. 17; Jer. ii. 7; Ps. lxxix. 1; 2 Macc. ii. 4, "The mount which Moses ascended and viewed the inheritance of

Whereby thou didst confirm thine inheritance when it was weary.
Thy congregation hath dwelt therein: 10
Thou, O God, hast prepared of thy goodness for the poor.

The Lord gave the word: 11
Great *was* the company of those that published *it*.
Kings of armies did flee apace: 12

God." *V.* 9 will thus refer to the gracious preparation of the land of Canaan to be the home of Israel. In contrast to the land of Egypt from which they had come, and the wilderness through which they had passed, it was a land of abundant rain (Deut. xi. 10—12; Ps. lxv. 9): though it too had known what it was to be 'weary' with drought (Gen. xlvii. 13). But *a plentiful rain*, lit. *rain of bounteousnesses*, is not perhaps to be limited to the literal meaning, but may include all blessings which God pours out upon His people of His gracious liberality.

whereby thou didst confirm] Omit *whereby*, which is not in the Heb. *Confirm* may mean *stablish* as in Ex. xv. 17; Ps. xlviii. 8; or *prepare*, LXX κατηρτίσω.

weary] Cp., though the word is different, lxiii. 1.

10. Thy congregation took up its abode therein:
In thy goodness, O God, thou dost provide for the afflicted.

The word rendered *congregation*, or, as R.V. marg., *troop*, or *family*, is a peculiar one. The corresponding Arabic word means "such a kindred group as was guided in war and on the march by one chief, migrating together, and forming generally a single settlement." Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, pp. 36 ff. From the meaning *life* or *living*, the word came to mean a *clan*, a group of one blood, on the old Semitic principle that "the life of the flesh lies in the blood" (Lev. xvii. 11). *Thou dost provide for the afflicted* is a general truth, which found special illustration in regard to Israel, 'afflicted' by the bondage of Egypt (Ex. iii. 7, 17).

11—14. With a few graphic strokes the poet recalls the victories by which Canaan was won and retained. He refers to the times of the Judges as well as to the original conquest under Joshua.

11. The Lord giveth the word:
The women that publish the tidings are a great host.

God's word is sovereign (xxxiii. 9; Is. xxx. 30). He has only to command, and the victory is won. Forthwith are heard the songs of the women proclaiming the good news. Victories were commonly celebrated by the Israelite women with song and dance. Cp. *v.* 25, Ex. xv. 20 f.; Judg. v; xi. 34; 1 Sam. xviii. 6 f. It is a less satisfactory explanation to regard *the word* as the song of triumph which God puts in the mouth of the singers.

And she that tarried at home divided the spoil.
13 Though ye have lien among the pots,
Yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver,

12. Kings of hosts do flee, do flee,
And she that tarrieth at home divideth the spoil.

Vv. 12—14 contain allusions to the Song of Deborah and possibly to similar poems which have not been preserved to us. Many commentators regard them as the triumphal song of the women celebrating the victory; but it is better to take them as the continuation of the poet's description of the victory. The verses run in pairs, and *v.* 13 is parallel to *v.* 12. The first line paints the scene in the battle-field—the pell-mell rout of the defeated kings: the second line depicts the scene at home when the warriors have returned with their spoils.

The unusual expression *kings of hosts* seems to be chosen with reference to the title *Jehovah of hosts*. Vast as their armies may be, they are powerless to resist One who has infinitely stronger armies at His command. The graphic repetition *do flee, do flee* recalls the form of Judg. v. 22; and the next line recalls the words of Judg. v. 30. The battle has been won; the warriors return home with their spoils; and the matron who has anxiously awaited the issue of the battle divides among her family the rich garments and ornaments taken from the enemy. Cp. Judg. viii. 26; 2 Sam. i. 24; 2 Kings vii. 8, 15.

13. An extremely difficult verse. It has been suggested that the second and third lines, like the first, are derived from some ancient poem now lost, and that to readers who could recognise the allusion they would be intelligible, though to us they are obscure. The A.V., which appears to contrast the squalid misery of Israel in Egypt with the brilliant prosperity of their new home in Canaan, must be abandoned, and two considerations must govern the interpretation of the verse.

(1) The first line clearly alludes to Judg. v. 16 (cp. Gen. xlix. 14, R.V.), where Deborah upbraids Reuben for cowardice and irresolution, and for preferring the ignoble ease of pastoral life to the glorious dangers of the war of independence:

> "Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
> To hear the pipings for the flocks?"

Lie is here substituted for *sit* to emphasise the idea of slothful inactivity.

(2) The second and third lines describe under the image of a dove basking in the sunshine an idyllic condition of peace and prosperity. The idea that the dove represents the enemy fleeing in all his gorgeous splendour, depicted thus as an inducement to Israel to pursue and win rich spoil, may safely be set aside. The point of comparison is the beauty of the dove's plumage, not the swiftness of its flight.

Three explanations deserve to be taken account of.

(1) **Will ye lie among the sheepfolds,**
(As) the wings of a dove covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold? (R.V.).

And her feathers with yellow gold.
When the Almighty scattered kings in it, 14
It was *white as* snow in Salmon.

The whole verse, like Judg. v. 16, will then be a reproof of the recreant Israelites who preferred the ignoble ease of their pastoral life to the hardships and dangers of the battlefield. But such a reproof is hardly in place here, nor does this explanation give its full natural meaning to the simile.

(2) More probable is the rendering of R.V. marg.:

When ye lie among the sheepfolds,
(It is as) the wings of a dove...gold.

which regards the verse as a description of the peace and prosperity which await Israel after the victories described in *v.* 12. "Everything will gleam and glitter with silver and gold. Israel is God's turtle-dove (lxxiv. 19), and accordingly the new prosperity is compared to the play of colour on the wings of a dove basking in the sunshine." (Delitzsch). This interpretation however fails to take account of the allusion in line 1 to Judg. v. 16.

(3) It seems preferable to render thus:

Though ye may lie among the sheepfolds,
The dove's wings are covered with silver,
And her pinions with yellow gold.

Though some Israelites may fail in their duty and prefer slothful ease to fighting the battles of Jehovah, yet Israel once more enjoys the blessings of peace and prosperity. In spite of man's backwardness God gives blessing. This explanation takes account of the allusion to Judges, and gives its proper meaning to the simile. It agrees better with the general purport of the Ps., which dwells upon God's victories on behalf of His people. It may moreover (if the Psalm dates from the closing years of the Exile) be intended to convey a tacit reproof to those Israelites who were in danger of preferring selfish ease in Babylon to the patriotic effort of the Return. It warns them that God's purpose for His people would be accomplished, even if they held back from taking part in it.

14. Of this verse, as of *v.* 13, the meaning is uncertain. Possibly it too is a fragment, significant to those who remembered its original context, but necessarily obscure to us. It is doubtful, too, if the text is sound. *In it*, R.V. *therein*, must mean 'in the land.'

Salmon, R.V. *Zalmon*, is only known to us as the name of a wooded hill near Shechem, from which Abimelech fetched wood to burn the tower of Shechem (Judg. ix. 48). But the name, which means 'dark' or 'shady' (cp. Black Mountain, Black Forest), may have been borne by other mountains. If Zalmon near Shechem is intended, it may be mentioned either as a central point in the land, or from its connexion with some historical incident of which no record has been preserved, or simply to heighten the picturesqueness of the simile by representing the snow-storm as seen against the background of the *dark* mountain. *Shaddai*, 'The Almighty', only occurs once again in the Psalter (xci. 1).

15 The hill of God *is as* the hill of Bashan;
A high hill *as* the hill of Bashan.
16 Why leap ye, ye high hills?

(1) Taking the second line as a simile, we may render with R.V.,

When the Almighty scattered kings therein,
(It was as when) it snoweth in Zalmon.

But what is meant by the simile? It has been supposed to refer to the bones of the enemy bleaching on the field of battle (cp. Verg. *Aen.* xii. 36, *campique ingentes ossibus albent:* "The vast plains are white with bones"): or to the glistening of the armour &c. dropped by the fugitives in their flight: but it is far more suggestive to think, not of fallen snow lying on the ground, but of falling snow. The snowflakes driven before the storm are an apt emblem of the kings driven in pell-mell flight by the breath of the Lord, and this explanation suits the context. By the thought of the victory won for Israel by God in spite of the sloth of many an Israelite (*v.* 13) the poet is naturally carried back to the battle-scene, and desires to emphasise the fact that the Almighty had fought for Israel, sweeping the foe before Him like the snowflakes swept along by the hurricane.

(2) Taking the second line literally, we may render with R.V. marg., **It snowed in Zalmon.** The words will then refer to a snowstorm which accompanied and completed the rout of the kings. They can scarcely refer to the hardships endured by those who took up arms amid the rigours of an exceptionally severe winter, in contrast to the luxurious ease of the cowards who are chidden in *v.* 13; still less can they be the words of those cowards excusing themselves from taking part in the war by the severity of the weather.

(3) Some combine the literal and figurative explanations, interpreting *it snowed in Zalmon* to mean that "the mountain clothed itself in a bright garment of light in celebration of the joyful event. Whoever has been in Palestine knows how refreshing is the sight of the distant mountain peaks covered with snow." This however is too far-fetched an explanation to be probable.

15—18. After the conquest of the land, God chose for His abode not the stately mountains of Bashan, whose natural preeminence might seem to mark them out for that privilege, but the insignificant hill of Zion.

15. A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan:
An high-peaked mountain is the mountain of Bashan.

Mount Hermon is probably meant, rather than the mountains of Bashan generally. It is the grandest of the mountains of Palestine, and was the northern boundary of Bashan (Deut. iii. 8). It has three summits of nearly equal height. Its natural preeminence seemed to mark it as *a mountain of God*, a mountain worthy to be the abode of God; and the early conquest of Bashan seemed to confirm its prior claim.

16. Why look ye enviously, ye high-peaked mountains,
At the mountain which God hath desired for his abode?
Yea, Jehovah will dwell in it for ever.

This is the hill *which* God desireth to dwell in;
Yea, the LORD will dwell *in it* for ever.
The chariots of God *are* twenty thousand, *even* thousands 17
of angels:
The Lord *is* among them, *as in* Sinai, in the holy *place.*

The grander mountains of Bashan, not Hermon only, but the rugged basaltic mountains which rise in precipitous peaks, suggesting ideas of majesty, antiquity, impregnability, are represented as looking enviously upon the insignificant mountain of Zion which God has chosen for His earthly dwelling-place. Sinai had been his temporary abode (Ex. xxiv. 16); on Zion He will dwell for ever. Cp. 1 Kings viii. 12, 13. The choice of Zion is a parable of the method of God's dealings with men. Cp. 1 Cor. i. 26—29.

The A.V. *why leap ye* comes from the Targ., and assumes that the root RTSD, occurring here only, is synonymous with RQD, used in a similar apostrophe, Ps. cxiv. 4, 6. But it is certainly to be explained from the meaning of the same root in Arabic.

17. The chariots of God are in myriads, yea thousands upon thousands.

God is represented as entering Zion in triumph with a vast retinue of the heavenly hosts. His chariots are not simply 'twice ten thousand' but 'counted by tens of thousands' (this is the idiomatic force of the dual termination), explained further as 'thousands of repetition,' i.e. thousands upon thousands. Cp. Dan. vii. 10. The A.V. *angels* is traceable ultimately to the paraphrase of the Targ., suggested by such passages as Deut. xxxiii. 2, but resting on no philological basis. The LXX χιλιάδες εὐθηνούντων, Vulg. *millia laetantium*, 'thousands of joyous ones,' presumes a slightly different reading, but was probably intended to give the same meaning.

the Lord is *among them*, as in *Sinai, in the holy* place] Or, **in the sanctuary** (R.V.); or **in holiness**. But as the words *as in* are not in the text, the rendering **Sinai is in the sanctuary** (R.V. marg.), or, **It is Sinai in holiness**, is preferable. With either rendering the sense will be substantially the same. The glory and majesty which were revealed at Sinai are now transferred to God's new abode. He comes surrounded as it were by an environment of holiness. Cp. Deut. xxxiii. 2. For the use of the name of a place to convey all the associations of the place cp. Mic. vi. 5, where "remember from Shittim unto Gilgal" means "remember all that happened there and in the interval."

Many commentators adopt a slight emendation of the text, and read **The Lord is come from Sinai into the sanctuary** (or, **in holiness**), a reminiscence of Deut. xxxiii. 2. From Sinai, the scene of His first great self-revelation to Israel, He comes to Zion, which He has chosen for His permanent abode. But the corruption of the text if it is faulty must be anterior to all existing versions: and the proposed reading has a somewhat prosaic ring.

18 Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive:
Thou hast received gifts for men;
Yea, *for* the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell *among them.*

18. *Thou hast ascended on high*] Lit. *thou hast gone up to the height.* Cp. xlvii. 5. 'The height' elsewhere means heaven, though we find such a phrase as 'the height of Zion' (Jer. xxxi. 12). Probably the poet did not make any sharp distinction between the triumphant return of Jehovah to heaven (as we speak), and the triumphant procession to His earthly abode which was the symbol of it.

thou hast led captivity captive] For the phrase cp. Judg. v. 12. 'Captivity' is not, as the English reader might suppose, a personification of the hostile powers which had led Israel captive, but the abstract for the concrete, equivalent to *a body of captives.* To obviate misunderstanding, R.V. gives 'thy *captivity*.' The captive enemies of Israel are meant, not, as some modern commentators suppose, referring to Is. xxiv. 21 ff., rebellious heavenly powers, nor, as Kay thinks, the Israelites themselves, though 2 Cor. ii. 14 (R.V.) would give a good parallel for this meaning.

thou hast received gifts for men] An impossible rendering, influenced probably by the quotation in Eph. iv. 8. R.V. rightly, **among men.** The 'gifts' offered to the king as Jehovah's representative and appropriated to the service of the Temple (2 Sam. viii. 2, 6, 11; 1 Kings iv. 21), are regarded as offered to Him as the real Conqueror.

yea, for *the rebellious also*] R.V., **Yea, (among) the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell (with them):** marg., *there.* 'The rebellious' are commonly understood to be the heathen, who pay homage to Jehovah, and dwell under His protection. But (see note on *v.* 6) the term is generally applied to the Israelites; and the line may be rendered, **Yea, even the stubborn (are content) to dwell with Jah Elohim.** Even the successors (in spirit) of the stubborn and rebellious generation of the wilderness are subdued when they see Jehovah's triumphs, and are content to become His obedient subjects. For construction and thought cp. v. 4; Is. xxxiii. 14. Another alternative is to take *Jah* as the subject of the infin., **Yea, even the stubborn (are content) that Jah Elohim should dwell (among them).** Cp. lxxviii. 60; Ex. xxv. 8; &c. So apparently the LXX.

St Paul quotes this verse in Eph. iv. 8 in the form, "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men," applying it to the spiritual gifts showered upon the Church by the risen and ascended Christ. How came he to substitute "gave gifts unto men" for "received gifts among men"? The Targum paraphrases the verse thus; "Thou didst ascend to the firmament, O prophet Moses! thou didst lead captivity captive; thou didst teach the words of the law; thou didst give gifts to the sons of men." Similarly the Syriac, which may have been influenced by Jewish exegesis, has,

Blessed *be* the Lord,
Who daily loadeth us *with benefits*,
Even the God of our salvation. Selah. 19
He that is our God *is* the God of salvation;
And unto GOD the Lord *belong* the issues from death. 20

"Thou didst give gifts to the sons of men." Now though the Targum in its present form is much later than St Paul's time, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the oral paraphrase then current already interpreted the verse in this way, and St Paul quotes it in the form familiar to him, without pausing to think whether it was an exact rendering of the original or not. But though the quotation is not verbally exact it is deeply significant. The triumph of Jehovah over the enemies of Israel prefigured the triumph of Christ over the spiritual enemies of the Church: or rather may we not say more truly that they are both parts of the same divine plan of redemption working first in the natural and then in the spiritual order? Christ ascended up to heaven, leading the defeated powers of evil in triumph (Col. ii. 15). There He performs a yet more royal function than receiving gifts from men, (though of course it would be also true to say that He receives gifts); He bestows them. Spiritual victory corresponds to temporal: the bestowal of gifts of grace to the reception of gifts of homage. For a full discussion of the passage see Driver in *The Expositor*, 1889, i. pp. 20 ff.

19—23. The second part of the Psalm (19—35) begins here. From reviewing the triumphs of God in the past the Psalmist turns to the present and the future. God is an ever-present Saviour; He will take vengeance on the enemies of His people.

19. *Blessed* be *the Lord*] We are again reminded of the Song of Deborah, Judg. v. 2, 9.

who *daily loadeth us* with benefits] Better, as R.V., **who daily beareth our burden**: or, as Aq., Symm., Jer. and Targ., **who daily beareth us**. In Is. xlvi. 3, 4, the same word is used in the phrase, "O house of Jacob...which have been borne by me": and in Ex. xix. 4; Deut. i. 31; Ps. xxviii. 9; the idea, though not the word, is the same. The R.V. marg. *Blessed be the Lord day by day: if one oppresseth us, God is our salvation*, involves the abandonment of the traditional accentuation, and gives a less satisfactory sense.

even *the God of our salvation*] In order to avoid the appearance of a grammatical blunder, the R.V. gives, **Even the God who is our salvation.** The whole verse might be rendered more exactly and forcibly:

Blessed be the Lord; day by day he beareth our burden:
God is our salvation.

On the position of *Selah* see note on *v.* 7.

20. God is unto us a God of deliverances;
And unto JEHOVAH the Lord belong the issues from death.

The plural denotes mighty and manifold deliverances. Cp. xliv. 4. GOD is printed in capital letters in the A.V. because it represents the sacred Name, for which *Elōhim*, 'God,' was substituted by the Jews in

21 But God shall wound the head of his enemies,
And the hairy scalp of such a one as goeth on still in his trespasses.
22 The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan,
I will bring *my people* again from the depths of the sea:

reading, when *Adōnai*, 'Lord' (the regular substitute) is joined with it. Even in regard to death God can provide ways of escape (cp. 1 Cor. x. 13). In the uttermost extremity of peril, when death seems inevitable, He can devise means of deliverance. Nay, though Israel as a nation seems to lie dead in exile, He can bring it forth from that grave and give it new life (1 Sam. ii. 6; Hos. vi. 2; Ezek. xxxvii. 1 ff.).

21. *But God shall wound the head* &c.] **Yea, God shall smite through the head** &c. Cp. Judg. v. 26; Hab. iii. 13, 14.

and *the hairy scalp*] Omit *and*. The warrior's long hair is mentioned not merely as "a sign of exuberant strength and impenitent pride," but in allusion to the ancient practice of allowing the hair to grow when a vow had been undertaken. "With warriors in primitive times the unshorn head was a usual mark of their consecration to the work they had undertaken, and their locks remained untouched till they had achieved their enterprise or had perished in the attempt. War among most primitive peoples is a sacred function." J. S. Black in the *Smaller Cambr. Bible for Schools*, on Judg. v. 2, which should be rendered

"For that flowing locks were worn in Israel,
For that the people volunteered themselves, bless ye the LORD,"

i.e. give thanks for the zeal with which the people devoted themselves to the sacred war of independence. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 42, where "from the beginning of revenges on the enemy" should be rendered "from the hairy head of the enemy."

of such a one &c.] According to strict grammar, **the hairy scalp that goeth on in his guiltiness**, the scalp standing by metonymy for the man. The verb expresses the idea of open and defiant persistence.

22. *The Lord said*] The Psalmist either quotes some ancient promise, like that of Num. xxi. 34, or proclaims a fresh message from God with the authority and in the language of a prophet:—*The Lord saith.* But what is the object of the verb *I will bring again*? (1) If with A.V. we supply *my people*, the meaning will be that God will bring the Israelites back to their own land from all the places in which they have been scattered, in order that they may witness a complete and final triumph over their enemies (cp. Mic. iv. 11—13). This is the interpretation of the Targ., and Delitzsch quotes from the Talmud a touching story which shews that it was current in early times. When, after the destruction of Jerusalem, a number of young and noble captives were being conveyed by ship to Rome, where a fate worse than death awaited them, they all flung themselves from the ship into the sea, trusting to the promise of these words. (2) But the context makes it more natural to supply, as R.V., *them*, i.e. the enemies spoken of in *vv.* 21, 23. Though they hide themselves in the rock fastnesses of

That thy foot may be dipped in the blood of *thine* enemies, 23
And the tongue of thy dogs in the same.

They have seen thy goings, O God; 24
Even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
The singers went before, the players on instruments *followed* 25
after;

Bashan, nay in the very depths of the sea, they shall not escape, but be brought back to suffer a righteous vengeance. Cp. Am. ix. 2, 3, where Jehovah warns the sinful Israelites that no hidingplace will avail to shelter them from judgement. Bashan may be mentioned with allusion to Og, the depths of the sea with allusion to Pharaoh (Ex. xv. 4 ff.).

23. That thou mayest dip thy foot in blood,
That the tongue of thy dogs may have its portion from (thine) enemies.

This rendering of the R.V. probably gives the right sense, though the Heb. presents some difficulties. For *dip* should probably be read *wash*, as in lviii. 10, which passage (with the notes) should be compared. The thought of the approaching vengeance upon the enemies of Israel is a prominent one in Is. xl—lxvi. See e.g. xli. 15 f.; xlix. 26; lxiii. 1 ff. The judgement of the oppressor is in fact the necessary condition of the deliverance of the oppressed, indispensable moreover as the vindication of God's eternal justice.

24—27. These verses describe a solemn procession of thanksgiving to the Temple. But is it past, present, or future? Delitzsch is right when he says that it is "not the rejoicing over a victory lately won, not the rejoicing over the deliverance at the Red Sea in the days of old, but the rejoicing of Israel when it shall have seen the judicial and redemptive act of its God and King." It is an 'ideal' description. The poet's imagination springs forward to the great celebration of the victory described in *vv.* 21—23. It rises before his eyes as an actual fact.

24. *They have seen*] The subject is significantly indefinite: it includes all men, who have been the spectators of the conflict between God and His enemies. Cp. xcviii. 1—3; Is. xl. 5.

thy goings] The festal procession which celebrates God's victory on behalf of His people. He comes in triumph once more, as He came of old.

my King] The title is significant. He has again placed Himself at the head of His people and victoriously manifested His sovereignty. Cp. xliv. 4; lxxiv. 12.

in the sanctuary] R.V. **into the sanctuary**, retaining A.V. in the marg. The preposition implies His rest there after His entry. It is possible also to render as in *v.* 17, *in holiness* (R.V. marg. alt.). His triumph is the vindication of that holiness which is His supreme attribute and distinguishes all His action. Cp. Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 13.

25. *the players on instruments*] R.V. as P.B.V., **the minstrels.**

Among *them were* the damsels playing with timbrels.
26 Bless ye God in the congregations,
Even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.

among them were *the damsels*] An ungrammatical rendering. R.V. rightly, **in the midst of the damsels.** On either side of the procession of singers and minstrels playing upon stringed instruments were the damsels beating their timbrels (tambourines or hand-drums), as they danced joyously along. The scene recalls the thanksgiving by the Red Sea (Ex. xv. 20), when "Miriam took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances," for "the deliverance which is being celebrated is the counterpart of the deliverance from Egypt." (Delitzsch.)

26. This verse is best regarded as a part of the processional hymn. Cp. Judg. v. 2, 9.

from the fountain of Israel] Kay and Cheyne compare cxviii. 26, cxxxv. 21, and suppose that 'the fountain of Israel' is the Temple. But it is better to render with R.V., and A.V. marg., **(ye that are) of the fountain of Israel**; the patriarch being regarded as the fountain-head from which the nation is derived. Cp. Is. xlviii. 1, "O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah"; li. 1, 2; and Deut. xxxiii. 28. The address reminds them of the privileges of their ancestry. It is however possible that the preposition *from* is an accidental repetition of the initial letter of the word for 'fountain,' and should be omitted. 'The fountain of Israel' will then be the Lord Himself, the source of His people's life. Cp. Jer. ii. 13; xvii. 13; Ps. xxxvi. 9. The P.B.V. (Great Bible, not Coverdale) *Give thanks, O Israel, unto God the Lord in the congregations, from the ground of the heart* appears to be due to a misunderstanding of Münster's *In congregationibus benedicite deo atque domino ex origine* (*cordis*) *Israel*, Israel being wrongly taken as a vocative.

27. The representatives of four tribes are specified as taking part in the procession. Judah and Benjamin naturally represent the South. Jerusalem was on the boundary between them; and the Temple was in the territory assigned to Benjamin (Deut. xxxiii. 12; Josh. xviii. 16), which may account for the place of honour being assigned to it. But why are Zebulun and Naphtali selected to represent the North? Is it as a recognition of their heroic patriotism commemorated in the Song of Deborah (Judg. v. 18) of which this Psalm contains so many reminiscences? or is it (on the assumption of the exilic date of the Psalm) an allusion to the prophecy of Isaiah (ix. 1), that just those tribes which had suffered most severely from the first Assyrian invasion should be restored to honour? This, if the exilic date of the Psalm is adopted, is the most obvious explanation. The prophets from Amos (ix. 11 ff.) and Hosea (iii. 5) onward, foretold the restoration of Israel as well as Judah, and their reunion into one state, and the Psalmist sees this hope visibly fulfilled in the festal procession. It may be noted that in Jer. iii. 17, 18, the restoration of the reunited people is placed in close connexion with the conflux of the nations to worship at Jerusalem of which the Psalmist

There *is* little Benjamin *with* their ruler,
The princes of Judah *and* their council,
The princes of Zebulun, *and* the princes of Naphtali. 27
Thy God hath commanded thy strength:
Strengthen, O God, that which thou hast wrought for us. 28
Because of thy temple at Jerusalem
Shall kings bring presents unto thee. 29

goes on to speak in *vv.* 28 ff. It is important to remember that the Israelites who returned from Babylon regarded themselves as representing the whole nation, and not the kingdom of Judah only. Cp. Ezr. viii. 35; Ps. cxxii. 4.

little Benjamin with *their ruler*] Omit *with*. Benjamin is called *little* as the youngest of the sons of Jacob, and the smallest of the tribes in population and territory (1 Sam. ix. 21). *Their ruler* is explained by the Targ. as an allusion to Saul's kingship; "There was Benjamin, small among the tribes, who first went down into the [Red] Sea, and therefore first received the kingdom": by others it is supposed to mean 'conducting them.' The word is obscure and possibly corrupt.

and *their council*] Or, **company.**

28—31. The purpose and sequel of the restoration of Israel is the conversion of the world; and the Psalmist now prays that God will display His strength and subdue all opposition, and sees the noblest of the nations hastening to pay Him homage.

28. *Thy God* &c.] Israel is addressed; the first line is a summary statement of past experience, introduced as the ground of the prayer which follows. In past times God has given Israel strength; therefore Israel can now pray with confidence for the renewal and continuance of His support. But the Ancient Versions (LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer. (some MSS.), Syr., Targ.) read (the difference in the verb is simply in the vowels), *O God, command thy strength:* i.e. give charge to Thy power, put it forth. Cp. xlii. 8; xliv. 4. This suits the parallelism better, and avoids the abrupt and isolated address to Israel.

Strengthen, O God &c.] This rendering is grammatically questionable, and the R.V. marg. is to be preferred: *Be strong, O God, thou that hast wrought for us;* i.e. shew Thyself strong as in time past. Cp. Is. xxvi. 12.

29. *Because of thy temple at Jerusalem*] To the age of the Return the restored Temple was the visible symbol and proof that Jehovah had come back to His ancient dwelling-place (cxxii. 9). It was to be the occasion and the centre of fresh homage. Cp. Is. lx. 7 ff.; lxvi. 20; Hagg. ii. 7; Zech. ii. 11 ff.; vi. 15; viii. 21 ff.

From thy temple however is a more natural rendering than *because of thy temple*; and it is possible that the words should be joined with the preceding verse—either thus, *thou that hast wrought for us out of thy temple;* or better still, *shew thyself strong, thou who hast wrought for us,*

30 Rebuke the company of spearmen,
The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people,
Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver:
Scatter thou the people *that* delight in war.
31 Princes shall come out of Egypt;
Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.

out of thy temple[1]; cp. cx. 2. The next line will then begin: *Up to Jerusalem shall kings* &c.

bring presents] A phrase used only in lxxvi. 11; Is. xviii. 7, of bringing solemn tribute to God.

30. *the company of spearmen*] Better as R.V., **the wild beast of the reeds**, i.e. the crocodile, or rather, the hippopotamus, which is described in Job xl. 21 as lying "in the covert of the reed." It is a symbolical designation of Egypt, which is mentioned either as the typical enemy of Israel, or with reference to circumstances of the time.

the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the people] R.V. **peoples.** The kings or leaders of heathen nations, followed by their peoples as the calves of the herd follow the bulls. Cp. Jer. xlvi. 20, 21, R.V. 'Bulls' suggests the idea of proud defiance; 'calves' that of comfortable security.

till every one *submit himself with pieces of silver*] Lit. as R.V. marg., Every one *submitting himself* &c. Their proud spirits are subdued by the irresistible divine 'rebuke' (lxxvi. 6; Is. xvii. 13); they prostrate themselves in the dust before the Lord of the world, and offer tribute of their wealth. Cp. Is. lx. 9. This gives a fair sense, but the construction is difficult. The difficulty is avoided by the rendering of R.V., which makes the participle refer to God: **Trampling under foot the pieces of silver**, i.e. spurning the tribute which they bring Thee. The true meaning is however quite uncertain, and the text is very possibly corrupt. The Ancient Versions vary greatly, some of them pointing to varieties of reading. Of the host of modern emendations, one may be mentioned which only requires alteration of the vowel points: 'Trampling under foot *them that delight in silver*'; but it can hardly be pronounced satisfactory.

scatter thou &c.] The Massoretic Text reads: **He hath scattered the peoples**: a 'prophetic perfect,' realising the triumph of God over all opposition as already complete. But it suits the context better to read the imperative with LXX and Jer., **scatter thou.** The difference is one of vocalisation only.

31. *Princes*] Or, **magnates.** LXX πρέσβεις, *ambassadors*. The word occurs here only, and is of doubtful meaning.

shall soon stretch out &c.] R.V., **shall haste to stretch out her hands unto God**, either in token of submission (cp. Lat. *dare manus*);

[1] The pausal form of the word מֵהֵיכָלֶךָ *out of thy temple*, looks like the trace of a tradition that the verses were once so divided.

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ; 32
O sing *praises unto* the Lord ; Selah.
To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, *which were* 33
of old ;
Lo, he doth send out his voice, *and that* a mighty voice.
Ascribe ye strength unto God : 34
His excellency *is* over Israel,
And his strength *is* in the clouds.
O God, *thou art* terrible out of thy holy places : 35

or in supplication (cp. Is. xlv. 14); or with gifts of homage (lxxii. 10; Is. xviii. 7). Egypt and Ethiopia are often coupled together, and they are mentioned here as examples of the nations which come to pay homage, the one as the typical ancient enemy of Israel (cp. Is. xix. 19 ff.), the other as a remote nation of noble appearance and formidable reputation (Is. xviii. 1, 7). Cp. Is. xlv. 14. Their submission signifies that the most inveterate foes of God and His people, and the most remote and the noblest of the peoples of the world, acknowledge His supremacy. *Morians* in P.B.V. means 'Moors,' 'blackamoors,' the Heb. *Cush* being taken as a general term for 'Africans.'

32—35. All nations are summoned to unite in praising Israel's God.

32. The kingdoms of the earth are invited to reecho Israel's chorus of praise, *v.* 4. Cp. Rev. xi. 15 ff. The musical interlude (*Selah*) may suggest the outbreak of the chorus of universal praise.

33. *To him that rideth* &c.] The same God who "rides through the deserts" (*v.* 4) when He intervenes in human affairs is supremely exalted in the highest heavens (Deut. x. 14; 1 Kings viii. 27; Neh. ix. 6), which like the mountains (Deut. xxxiii. 15) are of primeval antiquity.

which were *of old*] Better, with R.V., **which are of old.** Cp. Wordsworth's "the most ancient heavens."

he doth send out his voice] R.V., **he uttereth his voice,** as xlvi. 6. Cp. xxix. 3 ff.; Is. xxx. 30.

34. *Ascribe* &c.] Lit. as in xxix. 1, *give.* Acknowledge by the tribute of your praises the power which is His and which He exercises in the world.

His excellency, or *majesty, is over Israel* to protect and bless, *and his strength is in the skies*, supreme not on earth alone, but throughout the universe. This and the last verse are based upon Deut. xxxiii. 26,

> "There is none like God (*El*), O Jeshurun,
> Who rideth upon the heavens as thy help,
> And in his excellency on the skies."

35. *O God*, thou art *terrible* &c.] This rendering is retained in R.V., but grammar requires us to render (cp. R.V. marg.); **Terrible is God out of thy sanctuary.** Israel is addressed: and the verse is the answer of the nations to the summons of *v.* 34, acknowledging the awful might (Ex. xv. 11; Deut. x. 17; Ps. xlvii. 2) which God displays

The God of Israel *is* he
That giveth strength and power unto *his* people.
Blessed *be* God.

from His sanctuary in the midst of Israel (cp. *v.* 29 note), recognising Him as the source of Israel's preeminence, and in conclusion reechoing Israel's watchword of praise, *Blessed be God.* Simpler but less forcible is the reading of LXX and Jer., *out of his sanctuary*, making the verse the Psalmist's own conclusion.

thy holy places] Better, **thy sanctuary**, as the word is generally rendered (Ex. xv. 17; Ps. lxxviii. 69; xcvi. 6, &c.). The plural is an idiomatic plural of 'extension' or 'amplification,' denoting the various parts of the Temple, or its dignity.

the God of Israel is *he that giveth*] Better as R.V., **the God of Israel, he giveth** &c.

power] Or, **mightiness.** The subst. is found here only, but the adj. is common, cp. Deut. iv. 38; Is. lx. 22.

unto his *people*] Cp. xxix. 11; Is. xl. 29. Lit., **the people**, which stands out among the nations of the world as the people of His choice.

Thus the Psalmist's outlook reaches forward to the final triumph celebrated in the Apocalyptic song, Rev. xv. 3 f.

PSALM LXIX.

This plaintive cry for help falls into two divisions, each of which may be subdivided into three stanzas.

i. The Psalmist entreats God to rescue him from the deadly foes who beset him (1—6). He urges as the ground of his prayer that it is for God's sake that he is being persecuted (7—12); and then with more strenuous insistence repeats his cry for help (13—18).

ii. Once more he lays before God all the inhumanity of his persecutors (19—21); and, goaded by the recollection of their behaviour, imprecates upon them the judgement they deserve (22—28). Regaining his calmness, he looks forward with confidence to his deliverance and consequent thanksgiving; and concludes with a call to universal praise for the redemption and restoration of Zion which God will assuredly accomplish (29—36).

The name of David stands in the title, but though the Psalm may have been taken from a collection bearing his name, it is impossible to suppose that it was written by him. To what period of his life could *vv.* 8 ff. refer, or how can *vv.* 33 ff. be connected with his reign? These latter verses, which cannot be detached from the Psalm as a later liturgical addition, point decidedly to the Exile, or to the closing years of the kingdom, when Jehoiachin and the flower of the population of Judah had already been carried into captivity (B.C. 597), and the final downfall of the state was imminent. The latter alternative is the most probable; and the circumstances, ideas, and language of the Psalmist so remarkably resemble those of Jeremiah, that it has been conjectured

with much plausibility that he was the author of the Psalm. It is not indeed to be supposed that the metaphorical expressions of *vv.* 1, 2, 14, 15 are a literal description of his sufferings in the dungeon of Malchiah, (ch. xxxviii. 6 ff.), or that the Psalm was composed as he lay there, though the language may have been partly suggested by his treatment upon that occasion; and it is of course impossible positively to affirm that it was written by him; but it is certainly to the Book of Jeremiah that we must turn for the most vivid illustration of the circumstances and the feelings of the Psalmist. If Jeremiah was not the author, it must have been some prophet of a kindred temper of mind under very similar circumstances.

(1) The general situation of the Psalmist corresponds remarkably to that of Jeremiah as he describes it himself in chaps. xi. 18 ff., xii. 1 ff., xv. 10 ff., xvii. 12 ff., xviii. 18 ff., xx. 7 ff., and elsewhere. His words, "Know that for thy sake I bear reproach" (xv. 15), might be taken as the motto of the Psalm. Like Jeremiah, the Psalmist is the victim of contempt which crushes his spirits and hostility which threatens his life. His persecutors are not heathen foreigners, but godless fellow-countrymen; and even his own relations have deserted him.

(2) The Psalmist's imprecations of judgement on his enemies find a close parallel in the passages already referred to: and the prediction of the restoration of Judah with which the Psalm closes is a brief summary of Jeremiah's prophecies collected in chaps. xxx—xxxiii. The Psalmist's intense depression of spirit and sudden changes of feeling are very characteristic of Jeremiah. Cp. e.g., Jer. xx. 13.

(3) The language of the Psalm is full of coincidences with the language of Jeremiah, which will be pointed out in the notes.

In such a case proof is impossible, but it will give point and reality to the Psalm, if we hear in it the voice of the martyr-prophet to whom was assigned the bitter task of delivering God's message to a hardened and impenitent people, by whom it was received with indifference or open contempt: who, while divinely strengthened to deliver that message with unflinching courage, and inspired to look forward with unshaken faith to the rise of a nobler order out of the ruins of the old, yet in moments of human weakness almost lost his own personal trust in God, and became the prey of impatience and despair[1].

No Psalm, with the exception of Ps. xxii, is so frequently quoted in the N.T. The experience of the Psalmist (*v.* 4) was 'fulfilled' in the causeless hatred of the Jews for the Son of God (John xv. 25). The consuming zeal of Jesus for the honour of His Father's desecrated house brought the words of *v.* 9 to the minds of His disciples (John ii. 17): and the rest of the same verse is applied by St Paul to Christ, Who pleased not Himself, but voluntarily bore the reproaches intended for God (Rom. xv. 3). The words of *v.* 25 are combined with those of cix. 8 in Acts i. 20, to describe the doom of the traitor; and *vv.* 22, 23 are applied in Rom. xi. 9 ff. to the rejection of apostate Israel. The physical sufferings of the Psalmist (*v.* 21) foreshadowed those of

[1] The writer would refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, Lect. xi., for a sketch of the life and work of Jeremiah.

Christ (St John xix. 28 f.); and though he does not expressly quote it, the passage seems to have been in the mind of St Matthew (xxvii. 34, 48) in his description of the Passion. *Vv.* 12, 20 point forward to the mockery (Matt. xxvii. 27 ff.); and as we read *v.* 26 in the light of Is. liii and Zech. xiii. 7, its typical significance is obvious.

Yet the Psalm is not prediction but description, and much of it is plainly not applicable to Christ. The confession of sin in *v.* 5, and the imprecations of vengeance (*vv.* 22 ff.), are wholly unsuited to the meek and sinless Jesus. It is prophetic only inasmuch as the experience of each suffering servant of God who endured reproach and persecution for God's sake under the old covenant was in some measure a type and foreshadowing of the experience of the true and perfect Servant of the Lord. Even the details of their lives were shaped so as to correspond to details in the life of Christ: and these details serve to attract attention and to point to the inner correspondence by which He gathered up and 'fulfilled' the experience of the saints and servants of God who had gone before. Jeremiah was a type of Christ: but he and others like him were but partial and imperfect types: there was much in their lives and characters which shewed that they were men compassed with infirmity: but in the antitype the imperfections disappear, and the true Son of Man, the perfect Servant of the Lord, stands revealed. On the 'Passion Psalms' in general see *Introd.* pp. lxi f.

For a discussion of the imprecations of *vv.* 21 ff., which startle and shock the Christian reader, see *Introd.* pp. lxx ff. Here it may suffice to remark that if the reader would be fair to Jeremiah (or the unknown author) he must endeavour to realise the intense provocation to which Jeremiah was subjected. He must remember that they are to be judged by the standard of the Law, and not by the spirit of the Gospel. He must bear in mind that they are not merely or mainly the utterance of personal vindictiveness, but the expression of a burning desire for the manifestation of the righteous judgement of God upon those who resisted His will and persecuted His servants.

This Psalm should be compared with Pss. xxii and xl; it has also points of connexion with Pss. xxxi, xxxviii, xliv; and in its imprecations it stands midway between Pss. xxxv and cix.

Its typical character explains its selection as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim, *A Psalm* of David.

69 Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto *my* soul.

On the title **For the Chief Musician; set to Shoshannim**, i.e. *lilies*, see note on the title of Ps. xlv.

1—6. The Psalmist appeals to God for help, pleading the extremity of his plight.

1. *the waters* &c.] He is like a drowning man. The flood of calamity has risen till it threatens his life. For the metaphor cp. xviii. 16; xxxii. 6; lxvi. 12; cxxiv. 4; Lam. iii. 54; and for *unto my soul* see Jer. iv. 10, 18; Jon. ii. 5.

I sink in deep mire, where *there is* no standing: 2
I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: 3
Mine eyes fail while *I* wait for my God.
They that hate me without a cause are moe than the 4
hairs of mine head:
They that would destroy me, *being* mine enemies wrongfully,
are mighty:
Then I restored *that* which I took not away.

2. He is like a man floundering in a morass or quicksand where there is no footing and his struggles only plunge him deeper, or fording a river and in imminent danger of being swept away by the current. Quagmires, 'treacherous to the last degree,' are common in Palestine. See Thomson's *Land and the Book*, p. 360; and Dr Tristram's description of the vast and impenetrable swamp of Huleh, where a false step off the roots of the papyrus "will take the intruder over head in suffocating peat mud." *Land of Israel*, p. 579.

the floods overflow me] Or, *the current*—'Shibbōleth,' Judg. xii. 6—*sweeps me away*.

3. He is worn out and exhausted in mind and body by the prolonged strain of prayer unanswered. Cp. xxii. 1, 2, 15; vi. 7; Jer. xlv. 3; Ps. cxix. 82, 123; Lam. ii. 11, iv. 17. For *I am weary of* &c., render with R.V. **I am weary with my crying.**

4. The number and the virulence of his foes, and the groundlessness of their hostility. For the language comp. xl. 12; xxxv. 19; xxxviii. 19. The quotation in John xv. 25 agrees with the LXX.

moe] This archaism for 'more,' which has disappeared from modern Bibles, is restored by Scrivener in accordance with the original edition of 1611.

they that would destroy me] R.V., **they that would cut me off.** Ewald and others follow the Syr. in reading this line, 'More numerous *than my bones* are they that are mine enemies falsely.' The parallelism of the first two lines of the verse is improved by the change, which involves only a slight alteration of the consonants; but the comparison is not a natural one, and the reading of the text is supported by the use of the same verb in Lam. iii. 53, in a closely similar context (note *vv.* 52, 54).

wrongfully] Lit. *falsely*. Their hostility is based upon misconception and misrepresentation.

then I restored] Or, as R.V. marg., *I had to restore*. 'Then' may refer to some signal instance prominent in the Psalmist's recollection.

that *which I took not away*] **That which I had not plundered.** Perhaps a proverbial expression for the extreme of injured innocence. He was accused of being an extortioner and oppressor of the poor who must be made to disgorge his ill-gotten gains (Ezek. xxxiii. 15). Cp. Eliphaz' charges against Job (xxii. 6 ff.), and Zophar's picture of the wicked man compelled to make restitution (xx. 18 ff.).

5 O God, thou knowest my foolishness;
And my sins are not hid from thee.
6 Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord GOD of hosts, be ashamed for my sake:
Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel.
7 Because for thy sake I have borne reproach;
Shame hath covered my face.
8 I am become a stranger unto my brethren,
And an alien unto my mother's children.
9 For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;

5, 6. Chastisement is not undeserved; but he commits himself to the mercy of the Omniscient, and pleads for a hearing on the ground that the cause of all God's servants is bound up with his cause. If he is abandoned they must be discouraged and exposed to the contempt of the world.

Thou is emphatic. Similar appeals to God's omniscience are characteristic of Jeremiah (ch. xii. 3; xv. 15; xvii. 16; xviii. 23). Sin is designated as 'foolishness' in Ps. xxxviii. 5, where, as here, the Psalmist acknowledges that his sufferings are the chastisement of his sin. This is the only other passage in which the word occurs, except in the Book of Proverbs, where it is common.

sins] Lit. *guiltinesses*; cp. lxviii. 21.

6. Let not those that wait on thee be ashamed through me, O Lord, Jehovah of hosts:
Let not those that seek thee be brought to dishonour through me, O God of Israel.

Cp. xxv. 3; xxxviii. 15, 16. The divine titles are significant. They appeal to God's sovereignty and to His relation to His people. Surely, since He has the power to prevent it, He cannot leave the true Israel to be the scorn of its foes, as will happen *through me*, or, *in my case*, if I am left to perish unregarded.

7—12. Such discouragement must be the inevitable consequence if he is abandoned, for it is for God's sake that he is persecuted and defamed. Comp. the plea of the nation in xliv. 14 ff.

7. So Jeremiah pleads, "Know that for thy sake I bear reproach" (xv. 15). *shame* &c.] cp. xliv. 15.

8. Even his nearest relations treat him as a stranger and a foreigner. Cp. xxxviii. 11; Job xix. 13 ff.; Jer. xii. 6.

my mother's children] **The sons of my own mother** expresses a closer degree of relationship than *my brethren*, the children of the same mother being always regarded as bound to one another by a closer tie than those of the same father by different mothers. Cp. I. 20.

9. His jealousy for the honour of God's house was like a consuming fire within him. Cp. cxix. 139; xxxix. 3; Jer. xx. 9. It is difficult to

And the reproaches of them that reproached thee
are fallen upon me.
When I wept, *and chastened* my soul with fasting, 10
That was to my reproach.
I made sackcloth also my garment; 11
And I became a proverb to them.
They that sit in the gate speak against me; 12

determine whether 'thine house' means the Temple only, or as in Num. xii. 7, Hos. viii. 1, bears the wider meaning of the land or the people of Israel. (1) In the former case the reference may be to the burning indignation which was stirred by the sight of abominations such as those which Ezekiel describes as polluting the Temple (ch. viii); and it is noteworthy that he particularly mentions "the image of jealousy which provoketh to jealousy," i.e. some image or symbol which was a direct challenge of the "jealous God" who could brook no rival, and which must have stirred the grief and indignation of His faithful servants. (2) In the latter case it is the general condition of the nation, the contrast between its calling to be a holy nation and the universal corruption prevalent, which stirs his deepest emotion. This alternative gains some support from Jeremiah's usage (xi. 15; xii. 7; xxiii. 11).

The zeal of Christ for His Father's desecrated house recalled these words to the minds of His disciples (John ii. 17: the reading of the true text follows the LXX (B), *shall eat me up*).

the reproaches &c.] Better as R.V., **the reproaches of them that reproach thee are fallen upon me.** On the one hand their blasphemies against God wound and crush the spirit of His servant; and on the other hand they shew their contempt for God by their mockery of His servant. Such was Jeremiah's experience: his contemporaries mocked God's message, and mocked him for delivering it (ch. vi. 10; xx. 8): such too was the experience of Christ Himself, to whom St Paul applies these words in Rom. xv. 3.

10, 11. When I wept, (and chastened) my soul with fasting,
It was turned to reproaches for me:
When I made sackcloth my clothing,
I became a byword unto them.

In shame and penitence for the dishonour done by his countrymen to God, he fasted and mourned; but they only mocked and derided him for doing what they ought to have done themselves (Jer. iv. 8; vi. 26).

The construction of the first line is anomalous. Probably the word for 'wept' is a corruption of some word for 'humbled' (xxxv. 13) or 'chastened.' For *byword* cp. xliv. 14.

12. They that sit in the gate talk of me,
And the songs of them that drink strong drink (make sport of me).

In the gate where men gather to hear the last gossip as well as to transact business (ix. 14; Jer. xvii. 19 f.) he is the talk of the city: his

And *I was* the song of the drunkards.

13 But *as for* me, my prayer *is* unto thee, O LORD, *in* an
acceptable time:
O God, in the multitude of thy mercy hear me, in the truth
of thy salvation.

14 Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink:
Let me be delivered from them that hate me, and out of
the deep waters.

15 Let not the waterflood overflow me,
Neither let the deep swallow me up,
And let not the pit shut her mouth upon me.

16 Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness *is* good;
Turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender
mercies.

austerities and oddities furnish a subject for the latest comic song of the revellers' parties. Cp. Lam. iii. 14; Job xxx. 9; Is. v. 11, 12, 22; Am. vi. 4 ff.

13—18. From the hardheartedness of men he turns to the mercy of God.

13. It is best to divide the clauses somewhat differently:

But as for me, my prayer is unto thee, O Jehovah,
At the time thou pleasest, O God, in the abundance of thy lovingkindness,
Answer me in the truth of thy salvation.

In an acceptable time, lit. *a time of good pleasure* (xl. 13; li. 18) is most naturally connected with *answer me*, as in Is. xlix. 8, "In an acceptable time have I answered thee." He cannot tell that it is yet God's will to deliver him, but he can be sure that the time will come, for God has revealed Himself to be a God "abundant in lovingkindness and truth" (Ex. xxxiv. 6), and if He is true to His character, He must save His servant. Cp. li. 1.

14, 15. In his prayer he repeats the words which he had previously used to describe his plight (*vv.* 2, 4). It is difficult to see why the R.V. has substituted *overwhelm* for *overflow* here and not in *v.* 2, the Heb. word being the same in both cases.

let not the pit &c.] Either the grave (lv. 23), or a dungeon (Lam. iii. 53, 55), may be meant. In the latter case Jeremiah's experience (ch. xxxviii. 6) may have suggested the metaphor; but the words are not to be understood literally of release from Malchiah's dungeon.

16. *Hear me*] **Answer me.**

for thy lovingkindness is *good*] So cix. 21.

turn unto me &c.] **According to the abundance of thy compassions turn thee unto me.** Cp. li. 1 note; Lam. iii. 32. 'Turning' or 'look-

And hide not thy face from thy servant;
For I am in trouble: hear me speedily.
Draw nigh unto my soul, *and* redeem it: 18
Deliver me because of mine enemies.

Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: 19
Mine adversaries *are* all before thee.
Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: 20
And I looked *for some* to take pity, but *there was* none;
And for comforters, but I found none.
They gave me also gall for my meat; 21
And in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.

ing' unto him (xxv. 16; cxix. 132) is the opposite of that 'hiding of God's face' which he deprecates in the next verse.

17. The Psalmist pleads his calling: surely God cannot continue to withhold His favour and help from one who is bound to His service and devoted to His cause. The plea would have special force if the Psalmist was a prophet like Jeremiah (Am. iii. 7). Cp. xxvii. 9; xxxi. 16; xliv. 24; &c.

for I am in trouble &c.] **Because I am in a strait, answer me speedily.**

18. *Draw nigh*] Cp. the acknowledgement of answered prayer in Lam. iii. 57, 58, 'Thou drewest nigh in the day when I called upon thee...thou redeemedst my life."

deliver me] Or, as R.V., **ransom me.** Cp. Jer. xv. 21.

because of mine enemies] Who will triumph if I am abandoned to their malice, and by whose triumph the honour of the God whom I serve will suffer. Cp. xiii. 4.

19—21. Once more he lays before God the severity of his sufferings, and the inhumanity of his enemies.

19. *Thou hast known*] Rather, **THOU knowest.** *Thou*, as in *v.* 5, is emphatic. See note there for references to Jeremiah's use of this phrase.

all before thee] They are all in Thy sight. He pleads with God as he might with men, who are more easily moved to pity by the sight of suffering than by merely hearing of it.

20. *hath broken my heart*] Cp. Jer. xxiii. 9.

I am full of heaviness] Or, as R.V. marg., *sore sick.* A cognate word is frequently used in Jer., e.g. xv. 18, A.V. *incurable.*

and I looked &c.] Or, *and I waited for some to sympathise, but there was no one.*

21. This verse is connected with the preceding one. Not content with merely refusing sympathy, they aggravated and embittered his

22 Let their table become a snare before them:
And *that which should have been* for *their* welfare,
let it become a trap.

sufferings, as though one were to mock a hungry man by offering him bitter and poisonous food, or a thirsty man by giving him sour and undrinkable wine. The language is plainly metaphorical: cp. Jer. viii. 14; ix. 15; xxiii. 15. The Heb. word *rōsh*, rendered *gall* (LXX χολή, Vulg. and Jer. *fel*), denotes some bitter and poisonous plant, which cannot however be identified with certainty. Tristram (*Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 447) thinks that the Poppy is the plant intended. "*Papaver arenarium* grows everywhere in Palestine; it springs up very quickly in cornfields, and its juice is most bitter and poisonous."

Vinegar cannot here mean the thin sour wine which was used as a refreshing beverage (Num. vi. 3; Ruth ii. 14), but such as had gone bad and become nauseous and unfit to drink.

Allusion seems to be made to this passage in St Matthew's account of the Crucifixion (xxvii. 34), though it is not actually quoted; and St John expressly says that the cry "I thirst" was uttered "that the scripture might be accomplished[1]."

22—28. At the thought of the intolerable inhumanity of his enemies he can no longer restrain himself, and breaks out into fierce imprecation. Some commentators, feeling the difficulty of such imprecations proceeding from the Psalmist, have regarded these verses as the utterance of the Psalmist's enemies, invoking destruction upon him and his companions. But such an interpretation is unnatural: the pronouns 'their' and 'they' in *vv.* 22 ff. cannot have a different reference from 'they' in *v.* 21.

22. Let their table before them become a snare;
Yea, when they are at peace, let it become a trap.

The language is suggested by the metaphors of the preceding verse. They had aggravated the sufferings of a joyless life: let their own enjoyments turn to their ruin. The idea of the transformation of their table into a snare becomes more intelligible if it is remembered that the table meant was probably a piece of leather unrolled and spread upon the ground, such as is still used in the East. The curse is intensified by the prayer that this fate may overtake them while they are in unsuspecting security. Cp. 1 Thess. v. 3. The rendering of the A.V., which is substantially the same as that of the P.B.V., is untenable. It was introduced into the 'Great Bible' from Münster's Latin Version *et quae in pacem* (*esse debuerant sint*) *in offendiculum*, and was doubtless derived by him from the Jewish scholar Kimchi.

The quotation of this verse in Rom. xi. 9 is made freely from the LXX, supplemented probably by a reminiscence of xxxv. 8 (xxxiv). The following verse is quoted exactly as it stands in the LXX.

[1] The 'Gospel of Peter' (ch. 5) represents the potion of "gall with vinegar" as poison administered to hasten death.

Let their eyes be darkened, that *they* see not; 23
And make their loins continually to shake.
Pour out thine indignation upon them, 24
And let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.
Let their habitation be desolate; 25
And let none dwell in their tents.
For they persecute *him* whom thou hast smitten; 26
And they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.
Add iniquity unto their iniquity: 27
And let them not come into thy righteousness.

23. Let the eyes which gloated over another's misfortunes be blinded: let the limbs which are the seat of the strength they have abused be palsied.

24. Cp. lxxix. 6; Jer. x. 25. *and let* &c.] R.V., **and let the fierceness of thine anger overtake them.**

25. *their habitation*] Rather, as R.V. marg., **their encampment**; cp. Gen. xxv. 16; Num. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxv. 4 (R.V.). The language is a survival from the habits of nomad life, with which however the Israelites must always have been familiar. Cp. Jer. iv. 20; x. 20. To the Oriental no prospect was more terrible than that of the complete extermination of his family. Cp. Job xviii. 19; Prov. xiv. 11.

The quotation in Acts i. 20 is a free adaptation of the LXX.

26. *For they persecute* &c.] They had no commission to aggravate the sufferings of one who was already smitten with the rod of chastisement by God Himself. We think of Job and his friends (xix. 21, 22), and of the Suffering Servant of Jehovah (Is. liii. 4). Cp. Is. xlvii. 6.

they talk to the grief] R.V., **they tell of the sorrow**, or as marg., **the pain.** The LXX and Syr. represent a reading which suits the parallelism better: "*they add to the sorrow.*"

him *whom thou hast smitten*] The plural of the next line suggests the rendering *those whom* &c., which the Heb. admits: but the A.V. follows the Ancient Versions in giving the singular.

those whom thou hast wounded] Cp. cix. 22, "my heart is wounded within me." Note that the Psalmist is not alone in his suffering.

27. Some commentators, retaining the A.V. rendering of *v.* 26, regard *vv.* 27, 28 as the words of the Psalmist's enemies, directed against him and his fellow sufferers. This interpretation has been advocated, as removing from the mouth of the Psalmist at any rate the most terrible anathemas. But perplexing as it may be, it is far more natural to see in these verses the climax of his imprecations.

Add iniquity &c.] Instead of taking away their iniquities by forgiveness, let one iniquity accumulate upon another till they are crushed by the load. Cp. xxxviii. 4; Jer. xviii. 23.

let them not come into thy righteousness] Let them have no share in the manifestation of that righteousness or faithfulness to His covenant in virtue of which Jehovah pardons sin and delivers from danger. Cp. v. 8; lxxi. 2, 15, 19, 24.

28 Let them be blotted out of the book of the living,
And not be written with the righteous.

29 But I *am* poor and sorrowful:
Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.
30 I will praise the name of God with a song;
And will magnify him with thanksgiving.
31 *This* also shall please the LORD better than an ox
Or bullock that hath horns *and* hoofs.
32 The humble shall see *this*, *and* be glad:
And your heart shall live that seek God.
33 For the LORD heareth the poor,

28. *the book of the living*] Or, as R.V., **the book of life.** The figure is borrowed from the lists or registers of citizens (Jer. xxii. 30; Ezek. xiii. 9). God has a book in which the names of those who are to be preserved alive are inscribed. The righteous have their names recorded in it (cp. Hab. ii. 4). May the names of these malefactors be struck out, or never inserted there! May they be deprived of their privileges as Israelites! May they perish and be utterly forgotten! Cp. Ex. xxxii. 32; Is. iv. 3; Dan. xii. 1. But—and this mitigates what would otherwise be the awful character of the imprecation—'the book of life' is not here to be understood in the full N.T. sense as 'the book of eternal life' (Luke x. 20; Phil. iv. 3; Rev. iii. 5; xiii. 8; xvii. 8; xx. 12).

29—36. In contrast to the fate which his enemies deserve, the Psalmist looks forward to his own deliverance, and predicts the restoration of Jerusalem and the reestablishment there of the true people of God. Such a sudden change of tone is quite characteristic of Jeremiah, e.g. xx. 13.

29. But as for me, who am afflicted and sore pained,
Thy salvation, O God, shall set me up on high.

The verb may be rendered as a prayer (A.V.), or as an expression of confidence (P.B.V.). God's deliverance will set him as it were in a high fortress, out of the reach of his enemies. Cp. lix. 1 note.

31. And it shall please Jehovah better than an ox,
(Or) a bullock that hath horns and hoofs.

The Massoretic accentuation makes one clause of the verse, reading it *better than an ox-bullock*: but the division of the clauses adopted by R.V. is preferable. The epithets are not merely ornamental: the horns shew that the animal is of full age; the hoofs allude to the definition of 'clean' animals in Lev. xi. 3 ff. But spiritual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving are more acceptable than the most perfect animal victim. Cp. Pss. l, li.

32. When the meek see it, they shall be glad:
Ye that seek after God, let your heart revive.

Cp. xxii. 26, and with *v.* 33 cp. xxii. 24.

33. *the poor*] R.V. **the needy,** as ix. 18, Jer. xx. 13, and frequently.

And despiseth not his prisoners.
Let the heaven and earth praise him, 34
The seas, and every *thing* that moveth therein.
For God will save Zion, 35
And will build the cities of Judah:
That they may dwell there, and have it in possession.
The seed also of his servants shall inherit it: 36
And they that love his name shall dwell therein.

his prisoners] Though He has cast them into the prison of captivity for their sins, He will not reject their prayers. Cp. xxii. 24; cii. 17, 20; cvii. 10 ff. After the capture of the city in B.C. 597, all the best part of the nation was carried into captivity.

34. All creation is summoned to join in a chorus of praise to God for the redemption of Zion, for it is an event of universal significance. Cp. Is. xliv. 23.

35. So Jeremiah couples 'Jerusalem and the cities of Judah,' xxxiii. 10 ff., xxxiv. 7: and the prediction of restoration corresponds to the prophecies collected in his 'Book of Consolation,' chaps. xxx—xxxiii. The language does not presume that Jerusalem was already in ruins, any more than do those prophecies.

that they may dwell there] Better, **and men shall abide there.**

36. Cp. Is. lxv. 9, 23.

they that love his name] Cp. v. 11; cxix. 132. The citizens of Zion will all be true Israelites, faithfully observing the first and great commandment of the law (Deut. vi. 4, 5, 13).

PSALM LXX.

This short prayer for speedy help and the discomfiture of malicious enemies is a repetition of Ps. xl. 13—17 with some slight variations. *Jehovah* has been changed to *God* in *vv.* 1*a*, 4*c*, and *Lord* to *God* in 5*b*, according to the usual practice of the editor of the Elohistic collection; but *Jehovah* has been retained in *v.* 1*b* and substituted for *my God* in *v.* 5*d* for the sake of variety, where *God* occurs in the same verse. In other respects Ps. xl appears to present a more original text. On the relation of these verses to the rest of Ps. xl, see Introd. to that Psalm. Probably, as the title suggests, they were detached from Ps. xl for liturgical purposes.

The title *to bring to remembrance*, prefixed also to Ps. xxxviii, has commonly been explained to refer to the contents of the Psalm, either as a record of suffering, or as a prayer intended to bring the suppliant to God's remembrance. But more probably it should be rendered, *to make memorial* (R.V. marg.), or, *for making the memorial* (LXX εἰς ἀνάμνησιν as in Lev. xxiv. 7; cp. Num. x. 10), and explained as a note of the liturgical use of the Psalm either in connexion with the offering of incense, or at the offering of the *Azkārā*. (1) The phrase *to make a*

memorial of incense occurs in Is. lxvi. 3; and for the connexion of prayer with offering of incense see Num. xvi. 46 ff.; Luke i. 9, 10. The Targum suggests this reference in its double rendering, *To remember concerning the use of incense.* (2) The *Azkārā* or *Memorial* was a technical term in the Levitical ritual (*a*) for the portion of the 'meal-offering' mixed with oil and burnt with incense on the altar (Lev. ii. 2); (*b*) for the incense placed on the shewbread and afterwards burnt (Lev. xxiv. 7). Though probably the term originally meant only 'a fragrant offering' (see Dillmann on Lev. ii. 2), it was interpreted to mean 'a memorial' (LXX *μνημόσυνον*, Vulg. *memoriale*) as bringing the offerer to God's remembrance. There may be an allusion to the use of Psalms in connexion with the *Azkārā* in 1 Chr. xvi. 4, where *to celebrate* (R.V.) is the same word as that used here.

The liturgical use of the Psalm must have arisen in days of national distress and persecution, and implies the application of the Psalm to the nation. A hint of this national application is given in the Targum of *v.* 1*a*, "O God make haste to deliver *us*."

To the chief Musician, *A Psalm* of David, to bring to remembrance.

70 *Make haste*, O God, to deliver me;
Make haste to help me, O LORD.
2 Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul:
Let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.
3 Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame

1. Make haste] The words, as the italics indicate, are not in the Hebrew; and as the text stands, we must either supply *make haste* from the next line, or render according to the Heb. idiom found in Is. xxxviii. 20, *God is ready to deliver me.* But probably the first word of the verse as it stands in xl. 13 should be restored, **Be pleased.** This word would be a link of connexion with lxix. 13, *in a time when thou pleasest.* *make haste to help me*] Cp. xxii. 19; xxxviii. 22.

2. The whole verse is a repetition, with variations, of xxxv. 4, 26 (cp. xxxviii. 12); and *vv.* 3—5 recall *vv.* 21, 25, 27, 10, of the same Psalm.

that seek after my soul] Or, **that seek my life.** The text of Ps. xl. 13 is fuller, 'Let them be...confounded *together*...my life *to destroy it.*'

let them be turned backward &c.] Render with R.V.,

Let them be turned backward and brought to dishonour
That delight in my hurt.

With the last line contrast xxxv. 27.

3. *Let them be turned back*] **Let them turn back,** retreating after their ignominious repulse (*v.* 2). Cp. vi. 10. The reading of xl. 15 is *let them be desolate.* The difference probably arose out of a confusion between the letters M and B (ישמו—ישבו), but may be due to intentional

That say, Aha, aha.
Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: 4
And let such as love thy salvation say continually, Let God be magnified.
But I *am* poor and needy: make haste unto me, O God: 5
Thou *art* my help and my deliverer;
O LORD, make no tarrying.

alteration. *for a reward of their shame*] Better as R.V., **by reason of their shame**, being foiled in their malicious plans.

Aha, aha] An exclamation of malicious pleasure at another's misfortune. Cp. xxxv. 21, 25. The text of xl. 15 reads 'that say *unto me*'; and so the LXX here, from which it has passed through the Vulg. into the P.B.V., 'that cry over me.'

4. Cp. xxxv. 27. The discomfiture of the wicked gives occasion for the righteous to rejoice in God, not only because they are set free from persecution, but because they see in it the proof of God's righteous sovereignty and the unfolding of His purposes of salvation.

such as love thy salvation] Cp. "they that love his name" (lxix. 36); and the corresponding N.T. thought in 2 Tim. iv. 8.

5. *But I* &c.] **But as for me, who am afflicted and needy.** Cp. lxix. 29, 33; ix. 18; xxxv. 10; xxxvii. 14; lxxxvi. 1; cix. 22.

make haste unto me, O God] So cxli. 1. The text of xl. 17, "The Lord will take thought for me," glancing back at "thy thoughts to usward" in *v.* 5, is probably the original reading. The variation here may have been introduced for the sake of closer parallelism to *make no tarrying*. *my help*, as xxxiii. 20: *my deliverer*, as xviii. 2, 48, a different word from that used in *v.* 1.

O LORD] In xl. 17, *O my God*. *make no tarrying*] Cp. Daniel's prayer (ix. 19, A.V. *defer not*), and the promise in Is. xlvi. 13.

PSALM LXXI.

Though this Psalm, like Ps. lxxxvi, is little more than a mosaic of fragments and reminiscences of other Psalms, especially xxii, xxxi, xxxv, xl, it possesses a singular beauty and tenderness of its own. It is the utterance of a faith which has proved the goodness of God in a life of many trials, and trusts to experience it to the end. It is fitly chosen for use in the Order for the Visitation of the Sick.

Some commentators regard it as a 'national' Psalm, taking the plural 'us' in *v.* 20 (R.V.) as the key to its interpretation, and supposing the speaker to be not an individual, but suffering Israel. The language of *vv.* 5, 6, 9, 17, is not a fatal objection to this theory; for many passages speak of the birth and youth and old age of Israel (cxxix. 1; Hos. vii. 9, xi. 1; Jer. ii. 2; Is. xlvi. 3, 4). But the transition from the singular to the plural in *v.* 20 is no proof that the Psalm as a whole is the utterance of

the nation. It was most natural that the Psalmist should pass from the thought of his own needs to the thought of the needs of the nation, in whose calamity he was involved. Doubtless the language of the Psalm is such as could be adopted by others, or even by the godly nucleus of Israel as a whole; but it bears in the main the stamp of a personal and individual meditation.

As to authorship and date, all that can be said is that apparently the Psalmist was an old man (*vv.* 9, 18), and that Israel was in exile (*v.* 20). The latter part of the LXX title, '[A Psalm] of the sons of Jonadab and those who were first carried captive,' may preserve an authentic tradition of its use in the exile. It has been attributed to Jeremiah on the grounds (1) that the free use of earlier Psalms is entirely in his style; (2) that *vv.* 5, 6 refer to his call (Jer. i. 5) and *v.* 21 to the dignity of his office, and that the general situation of the Psalmist corresponds to that of the persecuted prophet; (3) that his authorship would account for the use of this Psalm by the Rechabites, with whom he had been brought into such close connexion (Jer. xxxv). If it was composed by Jeremiah, it must have been in the latest period of his life, when he had been carried down into Egypt after the Fall of Jerusalem; when the stress and strain of his life was over, and yet he was by no means free from hostility and danger (Jer. xliv). But the grounds for attributing it to him are quite inconclusive.

One thought grows out of another, and there is no marked division into stanzas: but in the first half of the Psalm (1—13) prayer, in the second half (14—24) praise, predominates.

71 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust:
Let me never be put to confusion.
2 Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape:
Incline thine ear unto me, and save me.

1—3. The prayer of faith in the midst of danger. These verses are taken, with but little change, from xxxi. 1—3.

1. *In thee...do I put my trust*] Better, **In thee...have I taken refuge.** See note on lvii. 1,and cp. vii. 1; xi. 1; xvi. 1; xxv. 20.

let me never be put to confusion] **Let me never be ashamed.** He has put himself under Jehovah's protection: may he never be disappointed and disgraced by finding that his trust is vain. Cp. xxxi. 17; xxv. 2, 20; xxii. 5; Phil. i. 20. It will be remembered that the verse forms the close of the *Te Deum*.

2. *Deliver me* &c.] **In thy righteousness wilt thou deliver me and rescue me:** an expansion of the simpler *rescue me* in xxxi. 1. *In thy righteousness* stands emphatically at the beginning of the sentence in the Heb. The righteousness of God is a thought upon which this Psalmist loves to dwell (*vv.* 2, 15, 16, 19, 24). In virtue of that unchanging rectitude which is an inalienable attribute of Deity, He cannot desert His servant. He must be true to His promise. Cp. 2 Tim. ii. 13.

incline] Or, **bow down**, as in xxxi. 2: i.e. 'bend a listening ear.'

save me] In xxxi. 2, *deliver me speedily*.

Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto *I* may continually 3
resort:
Thou hast given commandment to save me;
For thou *art* my rock and my fortress.

Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, 4
Out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel *man*.
For thou *art* my hope, O Lord GOD: 5
Thou art my trust from my youth.
By thee have I been holden up from the womb: 6
Thou art he that took me out of my mother's bowels:
My praise *shall be* continually of thee.
I am as a wonder unto many; 7

3. *Be thou my strong habitation*] Better as R.V., **Be thou to me a rock of habitation.** God is called *our habitation* in xc. 1; and the phrase may be an intentional modification of the words *a rock of stronghold* in xxxi. 2. But some Heb. MSS., the LXX, Symm., and Targ., read *stronghold* here also, and the word *mā'ōn* (מָעוֹן) so closely resembles *mā'ōz*.(מָעוֹז) that the variation is probably due to accident.

thou hast given commandment] Cp. xliv. 4; lxviii. 28. To the three Heb. words rendered *whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment* correspond two words in xxxi. 2, meaning *for a fortress-house*. The curious similarity of the consonants in the Heb. suggests that the reading of the Massoretic Text here is a restoration of partially obliterated or faded letters: and the LXX translators, though they give a different rendering, appear to have found the same reading here as in xxxi. 2, or a closely similar one. The other Versions agree with the Massoretic Text.

my rock] **My cliff**: a different word from that in the first line, recalling the 'cliff' (*sela*) where David had been so unexpectedly delivered from Saul (1 Sam. xxiii. 25 ff.). On the metaphors see note on xviii. 2.

4—8. The ground of the Psalmist's appeal for deliverance.

4. *Deliver me*] R.V., **rescue me**, as in *v.* 2.

the unrighteous and cruel man] Comp. the complaints in Habakkuk (i. 2—4) and Jeremiah (vi. 7; &c.) of the prevailing injustice and violence. The singular is probably collective.

5, 6. A free imitation of xxii. 9, 10.

my hope...my trust] Cp. Jer. xiv. 8; xvii. 7, 13; and "Christ Jesus our hope" (1 Tim. i. 1).

By thee &c.] Better (cp. Is. xlviii. 2), **On thee have I stayed myself from (my) birth.** The same word is used in iii. 5; li. 12.

thou art he that took me] A different word from that similarly translated in xxii. 9, and of doubtful meaning. The rendering, *Thou hast been my benefactor from my mother's womb* (cp. R.V. marg.), suits the parallelism well. But cp. Jer. i. 5.

7. *I am* &c.] Or, **I have been as a wonder.** Many of those who saw

But thou *art* my strong refuge.
8 Let my mouth be filled *with* thy praise
And with thy honour all the day.
9 Cast me not off in the time of old age;
Forsake me not when my strength faileth.
10 For mine enemies speak against me;
And they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together,
11 Saying, God hath forsaken him:
Persecute and take him; for *there is* none to deliver *him.*
12 O God, be not far from me:
O my God, make haste for my help.
13 Let them be confounded *and* consumed that are adversaries
to my soul;

my sufferings regarded me as a typical example of divine chastisement, but my faith has remained unshaken throughout. Cp. Is. lii. 14; and Deut. xxviii. 46, where the punishment of Israel for its sins is spoken of as "a sign and a wonder." In a somewhat different sense Ezekiel was a 'wonder' to his contemporaries (xii. 6, 11; xxiv. 24, 27). The explanation 'I have been a sign and example of God's protecting care' is less natural. 'Monster' in P.B.V. is an archaism for 'portent,' or, 'prodigy,' from Lat. *monstrum.*

my strong refuge] Cp. *v.* 1, and Jer. xvii. 17, R.V.

8. My mouth shall be filled with thy praise,
And with thy honour all the day (R.V.).

Cp. 1 Chr. xxix. 11, "Thine, O Jehovah, is the greatness, and the might, and the *honour*, and the victory, and the majesty." The P.B.V. *that I may sing of thy glory and honour all the day long* comes from the LXX through the Vulg.

9—13. Repeated deprecations and prayers.

9. *Cast me not off*] Or, *cast me not away*, from Thy presence (li. 11), though for the time the nation as a whole is so cast out (Deut. xxix. 28; Jer. vii. 15).

10. *against me*] R.V. **concerning me.** Cp. iii. 2; xli. 5. What they say follows in *v.* 11.

they that lay wait for my soul] Or, **they that watch for my life.**

11. *God hath forsaken him*] Cp. xxii. 1; xxxviii. 21 *b.*

persecute] R.V. **pursue.** But cp. lxix. 26; Jer. xv. 15; xvii. 18; xx. 11.

12, 13. Reminiscences of xxxv. 22 *b*; xl. 13 *b*, 14 (lxx. 1 *b*, 2): cp. xxii. 11 *a*; xxxviii. 21, 22; xxxv. 4, 26; cix. 29.

make haste for my help] R.V. **make haste to help me.**

let them be confounded] R.V. as in *v.* 1, **let them be ashamed.**

consumed] Some editors would read *dishonoured* as in xl. 14, with some MSS. and the Syr. The Hebrew words differ in one letter only. But the LXX and Jer. support the M.T., for which cp. xxxvii. 20.

Let them be covered *with* reproach and dishonour that seek my hurt.
But I will hope continually, 14
And will yet praise thee more and more.
My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness 15
And thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the numbers *thereof.*
I will go in the strength of the Lord GOD: 16
I will make mention of thy righteousness, *even* of thine only.
O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: 17
And hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works.
Now also when I am old and gray headed, 18

14—16. Vows of praise and thanksgiving.

14. **But as for me, I will hope continually,**
And will praise thee yet more and more.

He contrasts his own future with that of his enemies.

15. **My mouth shall tell of thy righteousness,**
And of thy salvation all the day;
For I know not the tale thereof.

Salvation is coupled with righteousness, because the one is the outcome and visible manifestation of the other. Cp. *v.* 2; Is. xlv. 21. There is a play in the Heb. on the words *tell* and *tale.* They are derived from the same root, which, like *tell* in old English, means both to *count* and to *recount.* God's mercies are an inexhaustible theme. Cp. xl. 5; cxxxix. 17, 18.

16. *I will go* &c.] Better, **I will come with the mighty acts of the Lord Jehovah,** bringing them as my theme for praise. Cp. cvi. 2. The A.V. would at any rate require the singular, which is however read by the LXX and some other Versions.

17—20. Past mercies are the ground of hope alike for the Psalmist and for the nation.

17. *thou hast taught me* &c.] He has been a life-long disciple in the school of God. Cp. Is. viii. 16; l. 4; liv. 13.

have I declared] **Have I been declaring,** habitually and constantly.

thy wondrous works] A special term for the singular and conspicuous works of God, both in nature (Job v. 9), and in His dealings with His people (Ex. iii. 20), particularly in the great crises of their history (lxxviii. 4, 11, 32), which declare His power and love, and arouse the admiration of all who behold them. The word includes 'miracles' commonly so called, as one limited class of 'the wonderful works of God,' but is of much wider application. To recount and celebrate His marvellous works is the duty and delight of God's saints. Cp. ix. 1; xxvi. 7; xl. 5.

18. *Now also when I am old and grayheaded*] Better, **And even**

O God, forsake me not;
Until I have shewed thy strength unto *this* generation,
And thy power to every one *that* is to come.
19 Thy righteousness also, O God, *is* very high,
Who hast done great *things:*
O God, who *is* like unto thee!
20 *Thou*, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken me again,
And shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth.

when I am old and grayheaded: lit. *and even unto old age and gray hairs.* Cp. 1 Sam. xii. 2.

until &c.] Better with R.V.,

Until I have declared thy strength unto (the next) generation,
Thy might unto every one that is to come.

Thy strength, lit., *thine arm*, implies more than power; it suggests "thoughts of guidance, support, protection, government, chastisement, conflict, victory." (Kay). Cp. lxxvii. 15; Is. liii. 1; &c. It is more natural to supply *the next* (R.V.) than *this* with *generation*. But *generation* needs some qualification; and the Syr. (with which the LXX nearly agrees) may be right in reading, *until I have declared thy strength, and thy might to the generation to come.* Cp. xxii. 30, 31, and the note there.

19. is *very high*] Lit., **(reacheth) unto the height**, of heaven. Cp. xxxvi. 5; lvii. 10; Job xi. 8.

who hast done &c.] It is better with R.V. to connect this clause with what follows: **Thou who hast done great things, O God, who is like unto thee?** Jehovah is incomparable for power and goodness. The fundamental passage is Ex. xv. 11; cp. Ps. xxxv. 10; lxxxvi. 8; lxxxix. 6, 8; Mic. vii. 18.

20. Thou which hast shewed us many and sore troubles,
Shalt quicken us again,
And shalt bring us up again from the depths of the earth.

So R.V., with marg. note, 'Another reading is, *me*.' The *Kthībh* or written text (p. li) has *us;* but the *Qrī*, or accepted reading of the Jewish textual tradition, is *me*. The latter reading is supported in the first line by all the Versions except Aquila: in the second and third lines the LXX and Syr. read *me*, Targ. and Jer. *us*. The plural, whether it is the original reading or not, points to the correct interpretation. The Psalmist's hopes are not merely personal; he speaks on behalf of the nation whose representative he is; he looks for its restoration from its present state of humiliation. It is as it were dead and sunk in the depths of Sheol, but God can and will recall it to life. Cp. Hos. vi. 1, 2; Ezek. xxxvii. 12 ff.; Ps. lxxx. 18: lxxxv. 6. *Again* hardly expresses the full meaning: lit. *thou wilt turn*, or, *return* (*and*) *quicken us*. Cp. vi. 4; lxxx. 14; lxxxv. 4; Is. lxiii. 17.

the depths of the earth] The 'depths' denote (1) the vast masses of water stored away in the earth (xxxiii. 7), and hence (2) the subterranean

Thou shalt increase my greatness,
And comfort me on every side.
I will also praise thee with the psaltery, 22
Even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing
With the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel.
My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto thee; 23
And my soul, which thou hast redeemed.
My tongue also shall talk of thy righteousness all the day 24
long:
For they are confounded, for they are brought unto shame,
that seek my hurt.

abysses where Sheol was supposed to be situated. Cp. "the lower parts of the earth" (lxiii. 9), and Job xxvi. 5, 6.

21—24. Repeated prayers and vows of thanksgiving.

21. **O mayest thou increase my greatness,**
And turn again and comfort me.

Except in the Book of Esther the word for *greatness* is used of God's greatness or great deeds (cxlv. 3, 6); and the LXX reads *thy righteousness*, or, according to some MSS. and the Vulg., *thy greatness*. This may be right; but if the text is correct, the Psalmist thinks of himself as sharing in the honour of the resuscitated nation. He can hardly refer to personal dignity only. For *comfort* cp. Is. xii. 1; xl. 1. The past tenses of the P.B.V. in this and the preceding verse are due to the influence of the Vulg.

22. *I will also* &c.] **I also will give thanks unto thee**: in response to this new proof of Thy love. *psaltery*] See on lvii. 8.

thy truth] For in this manifestation of mercy to Israel God has shewn Himself *true* to His promises. Cp. Mic. vii. 20.

unto thee &c.] **Unto thee will I make melody.**

O thou Holy One of Israel] A title which is found frequently in the Book of Isaiah, but elsewhere only twice again in the Psalter (lxxviii. 41; lxxxix. 18), twice in the Book of Jeremiah (l. 29; li. 5), and once in a modified form in Ezekiel (xxxix. 7). Cp. too Hos. xi. 9; Hab. i. 12. Its use here in connexion with the redemption of Israel is significant. It denotes that God in His character of a Holy God has entered into covenant with Israel, and His holiness is pledged to redeem His people. For a fuller explanation of this title the present writer may be allowed to refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 173 ff.

23. **My lips shall sing aloud when I make melody unto thee.** P.B.V. 'my lips shall be *fain*,' i.e. *glad:* Vulg. *exultabunt.*

my soul] His whole self and personality, delivered from danger, will join in the glad thanksgiving. Cp. xxxiv. 22; lv. 18.

24. *My tongue* &c.] From xxxv. 28. The word for *talk* denotes musing, meditative speech.

for they &c.] **For they are ashamed, for they are confounded, that**

seek my hurt (R.V.). A reminiscence of xxxv. 4, 26; xl. 14 (lxx. 2). His faith realises the discomfiture of his enemies as though it had already taken place.

PSALM LXXII.

The preceding Psalm dwells much upon the righteousness of God: this Psalm depicts the blessings which will flow from the righteousness of His earthly representative, the theocratic king. In Psalm after Psalm in this book we have heard the cry of the oppressed: here is unfolded to our view the splendid vision of a perfect ruler who shall be the champion of the oppressed, whose glory will be, "redressing human wrong."

i. The Psalm begins with a prayer that God will endow the king with the knowledge of His laws and with the spirit of His righteousness. Thus equipped he will fulfil the ideal of his office, as the just ruler who protects the oppressed, and secures for his people the blessings of peace and plenty (1—7).

ii. Thus far the Psalmist has dealt with the relation of the king to his own people. Now, taking a wider sweep, he prays that he may have a world-wide dominion, and that the wealthiest and most distant nations may bring him tribute, won by the moral supremacy of his beneficent rule to offer him their voluntary homage (8—14).

iii. The Psalm concludes with prayers for the welfare of the king himself, for the prosperity of his people, and for the undying perpetuation of his memory as the benefactor of the nations, in whom the promise made to the seed of Abraham finds its fulfilment (15—17).

In rendering the title 'A Psalm *for Solomon*,' the A.V. follows the LXX (εἰς Σαλωμών) in regarding Solomon as the subject of the Psalm. Similarly the Syriac Version entitles it, 'A Psalm of David, when he had made Solomon king, and a prophecy concerning the Advent of the Messiah and the calling of the Gentiles.' But this explanation is untenable. The analogy of the other Psalm-titles points to the rendering of A.V. marg. and R.V., supported by all the other Ancient Versions, 'A Psalm *of Solomon*.' It seems then to have been regarded as having been composed by Solomon as an intercession to be used by the people on his behalf. Nor is this an impossible view of its origin and purpose. If the "last words" of David, uttered in the spirit of prophecy shortly before his death, describe the blessings which would flow from the rule of a righteous king, animated by the spirit of justice and guided by the fear of God, and anticipate the rise of such a righteous king out of his house in virtue of the eternal covenant which God has made with him, why should not the first words of Solomon be a prayer that these great hopes should be realised in himself by the world-wide extension and eternal duration of a kingdom founded in righteousness?

Many of the arguments urged against the Solomonic date are of little real weight. (1) It is said that in *v.* 2 the whole people is spoken of as 'afflicted,' and that *vv.* 12—14 "read like the hope of one who had seen the nation sunk in distress." But the reference is not to the nation as a whole, but to the poor and weak within it who were always liable

to be hardly treated by the rich and powerful. (2) *V.* 8 is said to be a quotation from Zech. ix. 10; and *v.* 12 from Job xxix. 12. It is however by no means clear that the Psalmist is the borrower. (3) The clear and flowing style is thought to be the mark of a later age. Delitzsch on the contrary finds in the somewhat artificial style a mark of the Solomonic period, and the argument is not one which can be pressed.

On the whole however the Psalm seems rather to reflect the memories of Solomon's imperial greatness than to anticipate it. For what later king it was written must remain uncertain. It may have been for Hezekiah, who came to the throne at a time when grave social evils called for reform, and when the hope of the advent of the ideal king in the near future animated the minds of the prophets. It is even possible that the Psalm does not refer to any particular king, but is a prayer for the establishment of the Messianic kingdom under a prince of David's line according to prophecy, the lyrical counterpart in fact of Zech. ix. 9 ff. At the same time it does appear to have a definite historical background, and to be a prayer for a king who is actually on the throne. The prayer in the Psalms of Solomon for the advent of the Messianic king (*Introd.* p. xxxviii) has an altogether different tone.

The hypothesis of Hitzig and others, approved by Cheyne, that it refers to some non-Israelite king, such as Ptolemy Philadelphus (B.C. 285), may safely be rejected. It is not conceivable that a poet of real patriotism, not to say of inspiration in the higher sense of the word, should have so grovelled to a heathen monarch as to apply to him the sacred language of Messianic hope, and to connect his name with the solemn promises to the seed of Abraham and the house of David.

But if the primary reference of the Psalm is to some actual king of Judah, it is plain that it reaches far beyond him. It is a 'Messianic' Psalm. It presents a picture of the kingdom of God upon earth in its ideal character of perfection and universality. It is thus in its nature not only a prayer and a hope but a prophecy. As each successive king of David's line failed to realise the ideal, it became clearer and clearer that its words pointed forward to One who was to come, to the true "Prince of Peace." Hence the Targum interprets it of the Messiah. It paraphrases *v.* 1 thus:

"O God, give the precepts of Thy judgement to King Messiah,
And Thy righteousness to the son of king David:"

and it interprets *v.* 17 of the pre-existence of His name:

"His name shall be remembered for ever;
And before the sun existed was His name prepared;
And all peoples shall be blessed in His merits."

According to the Talmud and Midrash, **Yinnōn**—the word in *v.* 17 which is rendered *shall be continued* or *shall have issue*—is one of the eight names of the Messiah. "His Name," so the Rabbis mystically interpreted the passage, "is Yinnon. Why is He called Yinnon? Because He will make those who sleep in the dust to flourish": i.e. He will raise the dead.

Following the example of Jewish exegesis, the Christian Church has rightly understood the Psalm to refer to Christ. Yet it is never quoted

in the N.T. Possibly the regal aspect of the Messiah was so dominant in the first age (Acts i. 6) that it needed to be kept in the background, until men had learnt that His kingdom was "not of this world," but a spiritual kingdom.

It was fitly chosen by the Early Church as the special Psalm for the Epiphany, foretelling as it does the homage of the nations to the Messiah, of which the visit of the Wise Men was the earnest.

It was a favourite Psalm of St Edmund, the martyr king of East Anglia, who spent a year in retirement that he might learn the Psalter by heart, so as to be able to repeat it in his intervals of leisure. Its kingly ideal seems to have moulded his life.

A Psalm for Solomon.

72 Give the king thy judgments, O God,
And thy righteousness unto the king's son.
2 He shall judge thy people with righteousness,
And thy poor with judgment.

1—7. A prayer that God will confer upon the king the gifts which he needs for the right exercise of his office. Then righteousness will bear the fruit of peace; redress and repression of wrong will promote the fear of God; under his beneficent rule the righteous will flourish.

1. God is the source of all judgement (Deut. i. 17); the king is His representative for administering it. May God therefore grant him such a knowledge of the divine laws and ordinances by which he is to govern Israel, and endow him with such a divine spirit of justice, as may make him a worthy ruler. Just judgement is the constant characteristic of the ideal king (Is. xi. 3 ff.; xvi. 5; xxviii. 6; xxxii. 1). The words of this verse and the next are the echo of God's offer to Solomon, "Ask what I shall *give* thee;" and of Solomon's answer, "Give thy servant an understanding heart *to judge thy people;*" and a prayer for the effectual realisation of the promise, "Lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart." (1 Kings iii. 5 ff.).

the king...the king's son] Not, to the king and his heir, for the Psalm speaks of but one ruler; but, to a king who is a king's son, the legitimate successor to the throne.

2. He shall give sentence to thy people with righteousness,
And to thine afflicted ones with judgement.

Many commentators render the verbs throughout the Ps. as optatives, *Let him give sentence*, and so forth. In *vv.* 8 ff. this rendering is required by the form of the verb; but here the form is a simple future. The administration of the king endowed with divine capacities for ruling is described (*vv.* 2, 4, 6), together with the resultant blessings (3, 5, 7). The rendering *give sentence* is adopted to indicate that the Heb. word is different from that in *v.* 4.

It has been argued that 'thine afflicted ones' implies that the nation was at the time in a state of depression and humiliation: but the term

The mountains shall bring peace to the people, 3
And the little hills, by righteousness.
He shall judge the poor of the people, 4
He shall save the children of the needy,
And shall break in pieces the oppressor.
They shall fear thee as long as the sun 5
And moon endure, throughout all generations.

is not necessarily coextensive with 'thy people'; it denotes, as frequently in the prophets, the poorer classes, who especially needed the protection of good government. See Is. iii. 14, 15; x. 2; Jer. xxii. 16; Am. viii. 4.

3. Logically this verse forms but one sentence, and the exact reproduction of the Heb. division into two clauses for the sake of rhythm has an awkward effect. The sense is, **By righteousness shall the mountains and the hills bear peace for the people.** The mountains and the hills, which are the characteristic features of Palestine, represent poetically the whole land, which, under a just government, will bear the fruit of peace and general welfare for its inhabitants. Similarly Isaiah describes peace as the result of righteousness (xxxii. 17); and peace was the distinguishing characteristic of Solomon's reign (1 Chron. xxii. 9), as well as of its antitype the Messianic age (Is. ii. 4; ix. 6, 7; Zech. ix. 10).

4. An expansion of *v.* 2. The oppressed and defenceless are the special care of the true king, "whose glory is, redressing human wrong." He does justice to 'the afflicted of the people'; he is the preserver of 'the children of the needy,' words which are best understood literally, not merely of those born poor, or as a periphrasis, according to a common idiom, for 'the needy,' but of children, especially orphans, at once innocent and helpless, and therefore calling for special protection (see Is. x. 2; Mic. ii. 9, for the dangers to which they were exposed): while he crushes the merciless oppressor, treating him as he had treated his victims (xciv. 5; Prov. xxii. 22, 23; Is. iii. 15; James ii. 13).

5. **They shall fear thee while the sun endureth,**
And so long as the moon doth shine, throughout all generations.

Who is addressed? Not the king, who is spoken of throughout in the third person, but God. The just administration of the king will promote reverence for God, Whose representative he is (cp. 1 Kings viii. 40; Matt. v. 16), so long as the established course of nature lasts. For the order of nature as an emblem of permanence cp. Jer. xxxi. 35 ff.; xxxiii. 20 ff.

The LXX however represents a different reading: *He shall endure as long as the sun*, &c.: a reference to the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David, as in *v.* 17: cp. lxxxix. 4, 29, 36, 37; xxi. 4. The word presumed by the LXX (יאריך) closely resembles that in the Massoretic Text (יראון), so far as the consonants are concerned, and it may have been the original reading: still, the text gives a good sense.

6 He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass:
As showers that water the earth.
7 In his days shall the righteous flourish;
And abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth.
8 He shall have dominion also from sea to sea,
And from the river unto the ends of the earth.

6. *He shall come down* &c.] A condensed comparison, for, 'he shall be like rain coming down.' The simile may have been suggested by the 'last words of David,' 2 Sam. xxiii. 4: cp. Prov. xvi. 15; Hos. vi. 3; Micah v. 7.

the mown grass] The meadow which has been mown, and which needs rain to start the aftermath (Am. vii. 1). The P.B.V. *into a fleece of wool* is an amplification of the rendering of LXX, Vulg., Symm., Jer., *upon a fleece*. The Heb. word means a *shorn* fleece or a *mown* meadow; probably the Ancient Versions meant *fleece* metaphorically of the meadow: Coverdale's paraphrase *a fleece of wool* may have been prompted by the recollection of the dew on Gideon's fleece.

7. *flourish*] The metaphor follows naturally upon that of the preceding verse. Cp. Prov. xi. 28; Ps. xcii. 12, 13. For *the righteous* LXX, Jer., Syr. read *righteousness*, which suits the parallelism better.

so long as the moon endureth] Lit. as R.V., **till the moon be no more**; for all time. Cp. Job xiv. 12.

8—14. May all nations submit to this best of rulers, recognising the paramount claim of moral supremacy.

8. *He shall have dominion also*] Render, **And may he have dominion.** The form of the verb here is decisive in favour of rendering as a wish or prayer, and governs the meaning of the verbs in *vv.* 9—11, which should all be similarly rendered.

from sea to sea &c.] The words are a poetical generalisation of the promise to Israel in Ex. xxiii. 31, "I will set thy border from the Red Sea even unto the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness unto the River"; and of the language in which Solomon's empire is described, 1 Kings iv. 21, 24 (where note the use of the same word *to have dominion*). If any definite seas are intended, they would be the Mediterranean on the West, and the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean on the East; but more probably the phrase is quite general, meaning, 'as far as the land extends' (Am. viii. 12; Mic. vii. 12). *The River* (rightly spelt in R.V. with a capital, as denoting the River *par excellence*) is the Euphrates: *the ends of the earth* (the same words as *the uttermost parts of the earth* in ii. 8) are the remotest parts of the known world. Extension, not limit, is the idea conveyed. The world belongs to God: may He confer upon His representative a world-wide dominion! a hope to be realised only in the universal kingdom of Christ. Almost the same words recur in Zech. ix. 10, and the son of Sirach combines them with the promise to Abraham in Ecclus. xliv. 21.

They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; 9
And his enemies shall lick the dust.
The kings of Tarshish and *of* the isles shall bring presents: 10
The kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts.
Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: 11
All nations shall serve him.
For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; 12
The poor also, and *him* that hath no helper.

9. Let them that dwell in the wilderness bow down before him, And let his enemies lick the dust.

Even the wild Bedouin tribes that roam at large through the desert, the freest of the free, submit to his rule. LXX, Aq., Symm., Jer., render, *Ethiopians*, the Targ., *Africans*; but the term is quite general. There is no need to alter the text. Cp. lxxiv. 14.

lick the dust] I.e. prostrate themselves with their faces on the ground in abject submission. Cp. Mic. vii. 17; Is. xlix. 23.

10. Let the kings...bring presents, or, as R.V. marg., **render tribute,** the word implying that they are rendering what is *due* to him. *Tarshish* was the wealthy Phœnician colony of Tartessus in southern Spain: *the isles* or rather *the coastlands* are those of the Mediterranean generally. *Sheba* was south-eastern Arabia (Arabia Felix), famous for its wealth and commerce; hence P.B.V., following LXX and Vulg., gives *Arabia: Seba*, mentioned in Gen. x. 7 among Cushite peoples and coupled with Egypt and Ethiopia in Is. xliii. 3, xlv. 14, is generally supposed to be the kingdom of Meroe in Ethiopia, but may denote a Cushite state on the Arabian Gulf. The most remote and the most wealthy nations unite in honouring the righteous king.

11. Yea, let all kings fall down before him, Let all nations serve him.

The allusions to Solomon's empire in this and the preceding verse are obvious. "All kingdoms brought presents and served Solomon."... "All the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom,...and they brought every man his present." His alliance with Phœnicia brought him into connexion with the West; he had extensive commerce both by sea and land with the East and South; his fame brought the queen of Sheba to visit him in person. See 1 Kings iv. 21, 34; x. 1 ff., 11, 15, 22, 25, 28, 29.

12. *For he shall deliver*] His claim to this universal homage rests not on the strength of his armies but on the justice and mercifulness of his rule. Cp. Is. xvi. 4, 5. The true victory of the kingdom of God is a moral victory. *v.* 9, it is true, refers to the forced submission of his enemies; but the same inconsistency is found in Zech. ix. 9 ff.: it was only by slow degrees that the triumph of the kingdom of God came to be completely dissociated from the idea of material conquest, and was realised to be entirely a moral triumph.

the poor also &c.] **And the afflicted, when he hath no helper.** The verse closely resembles Job xxix. 12.

13 He shall spare the poor and needy,
And shall save the souls of the needy.
14 He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence:
And precious shall their blood be in his sight.
15 And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba:
Prayer also shall be made for him continually;
And daily shall he be praised.
16 There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains;

13. He shall have pity on the weak and needy,
And the souls of the needy shall he save.

The weak may include the sick as well as the poor. Cp. xl. 1; lxxxii. 3, 4; Is. x. 2, xi. 4; Am. iv. 1. *Souls* primarily = lives, and so in *v.* 14.

14. *deceit*] **Oppression** (R.V.) or **fraud** (R.V. marg.). The word occurs elsewhere only in x. 7; lv. 11.

and precious &c.] He will not suffer it to be shed with impunity. Cp. for the phrase cxvi. 15; 1 Sam. xxvi. 21; 2 Kings i. 13, 14; and see Ps. ix. 12. P.B.V. *dear* means 'costly' or 'precious.'

15—17. A concluding triplet of prayers, for the welfare of the king (*v.* 15), for the prosperity of his people (*v.* 16), for the perpetuation of his memory (*v.* 17).

15. The connexion and meaning are uncertain. The R.V. connects the verse with *v.* 14, placing a colon at the end of *v.* 14 and rendering, **and they shall live**: lit., as marg., *he*, namely, each one of the afflicted ones. The literal rendering of the next clause is, *and he* (or, *one*) *shall give him*, which is understood to mean either that the poor man will grow rich and give presents to the king in gratitude for his deliverance, or that the king will not only protect the life of the poor man, but give him a rich largess in addition. Neither of these explanations is satisfactory. It is better to separate *v.* 15 from *v.* 14, and regard *vv.* 15—17 as a concluding series of wishes or prayers for the king and his kingdom.

So may he live, and may men give him of the gold of Sheba:
And may they pray for him continually, and bless him all day long.

May he live is an echo of the regular acclamation 'Vivat Rex,' 'Vive le Roi,' which we render *God save the king*. See 1 Sam. x. 24; 2 Sam. xvi. 16; 1 Kings i. 25, 34, 39. May the people not only greet him with the customary acclamation and offer him the choicest gifts, but pray for his welfare and bless him as the source of their happiness and prosperity. Cp. 1 Kings viii. 66. The P.B.V. 'prayer shall be made ever *unto him*' is untenable as a rendering of the Heb. It was doubtless suggested by the view that the subject of the Psalm is the divine Messiah.

The fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon:
And *they* of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.
His name shall endure for ever: 17
His name shall be continued as long as the sun:
And *men* shall be blessed in him:
All nations shall call him blessed.

Blessed *be* the LORD God, the God of Israel, 18
Who only doeth wondrous *things*.

16. May there be abundance of corn in the land upon the top of the mountains:
May the fruit thereof rustle like Lebanon;
And may men flourish out of the city like grass of the earth.

A prayer for the fertility of the land, and the prosperity of the people. The poet would see the cornfields stretching up to the very top of the hills, and hear the wind rustling through the ears of corn as through the cedars of Lebanon, a name in itself full of associations of beauty and fertility (Hos. xiv. 5 ff.). It is doubtful whether the verb means to *wave*, as A.V. *shake*, or to *rustle*. *Grass* is emblematic of freshness, beauty, abundant and vigorous growth. Cp. Job v. 25; Is. xxvii. 6. The increase of the population was a marked feature of Solomon's reign (1 Kings iv. 20), and is a common characteristic in the pictures of the Messianic age (Is. xlix. 20 ff.).

17. May his name endure for ever;
As long as the sun doth shine may his name have issue:
May all nations bless themselves in him, (and) call him happy.

The Psalmist prays that the king's name may not perish like the name of the wicked (Job xviii. 19), but may always *have issue*, be perpetuated in his posterity as long as time lasts (cp. *v.* 5). The Ancient Versions however (LXX, Syr., Targ., Jer.) point to the reading YIKKŌN, *shall be established*, instead of YINNŌN, *shall have issue*, a word which is found nowhere else. Cp. lxxxix. 37; 1 Kings ii. 12, 45. The LXX reads, "All the families of the earth shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him happy." But each of these last three verses is a tristich, and the words "all families of the earth" are introduced from Gen. xii. 3. *May all nations bless themselves in him*, invoking for themselves the blessings which he enjoys as the highest and best which they can imagine (cp. Gen. xlviii. 20);—an allusion to the promises to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. xxii. 18; xxvi. 4).

18, 19. This doxology is no part of the Psalm, but marks the close of Book ii. It is fuller than the corresponding doxology at the end of Book i (xli. 13), and those at the end of Books iii (lxxxix. 52) and iv (cvi. 48).

18. *who only doeth wondrous* things] Cp. lxxxvi. 10; cxxxvi. 4; Job ix. 10; and note on lxxi. 17.

19 And blessed *be* his glorious name for ever:
And let the whole earth be filled *with* his glory; Amen, and Amen.

20 The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.

19. *this glorious name*] Lit. *the name of his glory*, as in Neh. ix. 5. Cp. the similar phrase in 1 Chr. xxix. 13; Is. lxiii. 14. The Name of His glory is the compendious expression for the Majesty of His Being, as it is revealed to men.

and let the whole earth &c.] From Num. xiv. 21.

Amen, and Amen] So it is: the response of the congregation, affirming the ascription of praise on their own behalf (cvi. 48; Neh. viii. 6).

20. Compare the note in Job xxxi. 40 which separates the speeches of Job from those of Elihu and Jehovah. As the Fourth and Fifth Books contain Psalms ascribed to David, this note cannot have been placed here by an editor who had the whole Psalter before him. Most probably it was added by the compiler of the Elohistic collection, to separate the 'Psalms of David' from the 'Psalms of Asaph' which follow, and to indicate that there were no more 'Davidic' Psalms in his collection. The only Psalm in Book iii which bears the name of David (lxxxvi) is outside the Elohistic collection, and is moreover obviously a late compilation, composed of fragments of other Psalms.

THE PSALMS.

BOOK III.

PSALMS LXXIII—LXXXIX.

THE THIRD BOOK OF PSALMS.

TWELVE Psalms in the Psalter are entitled Psalms "of Asaph," of which one (Ps. l) stands by itself between the Korahite and Davidic groups in Book ii, and the remainder stand together in a group at the beginning of Book iii. It has been conjectured (see *Introd.* p. xxxix, note 1) that the isolated position of Ps. l is due to a transposition of the divisions of Books ii and iii, and that the original arrangement was (i) Davidic Psalms, 51—72; (ii) Levitical Psalms, (1) of the sons of Korah, 42—49; (2) of Asaph, 50, 73-- 83. But it is at least as probable that Ps. l owes its position to its connexion with Ps. xlix on the one hand and Ps. li on the other, and was intentionally placed by the compiler between the Psalms which he took from the Korahite collection and those which he took from the Davidic collection.

Asaph was one of David's three chief musicians. Along with Heman and Ethan (who seems to have been also called Jeduthun, see p. 348, and Intr. to Ps. lxxxviii) he was selected by the Levites to lead the music when David brought up the Ark to Jerusalem (1 Chron. xv. 16—19). He was appointed by David to preside over the services of praise and thanksgiving in the Tent where the Ark was placed (1 Chron. xvi. 4, 5, 7, 37), while Heman and Jeduthun ministered in the Tabernacle at Gibeon (xvi. 41, 42). His sons, under his superintendence, were leaders of four of the twenty-four courses of musicians (xxv. 1 ff.), and they are mentioned as taking part in the Dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. v. 12). In later times Asaph was ranked with David as the author of sacred songs, and along with Heman and Jeduthun, he bore the title of "the king's seer" (2 Chr. xxix. 30; 1 Chr. xxv. 5; 2 Chr. xxxv. 15).

The "sons of Asaph," that is, the Levitical family or guild of his descendants, are further mentioned in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 14), in connexion with Hezekiah's reformation (xxix. 13), and as taking part in the Passover celebrated by Josiah (xxxv. 15). Among the exiles who returned with Zerubbabel were "the singers, the sons of Asaph," in number 128 (Ezra ii. 41), or (according to Neh. vii. 44) 148,

and they conducted the service of praise and thanksgiving when the foundation of the Temple was laid (Ezra iii. 10). In the time of Nehemiah they are once more mentioned as holding the same office (Neh. xi. 22).

It is clear that all the Psalms which bear the name of Asaph cannot have been written by David's musician, if indeed any of them were, for some unquestionably belong to the time of the Exile or even a later period. Probably the title does no more than indicate that they were taken by the compiler of the Elohistic Psalter from a collection of Psalms preserved and used in the family or guild of Asaph, and bearing his name. Why one Levitical hymn-book should have been named from *the sons of Korah*, and the other from *Asaph* rather than *the sons of Asaph* can only be conjectured. Possibly tradition connected the name of Asaph himself more closely with it as the founder of the collection or the author of some of the Psalms in it, but it must have remained open to additions in successive periods.

The Psalms of Asaph are marked by distinctive characteristics. How is this to be accounted for, if they belong, as seems certainly to be the case, to widely different periods? It may best be explained by the supposition that a certain type or style of composition, derived possibly from Asaph himself, was traditional in the family of Asaph, rather than by the supposition that they were selected on account of their particular characteristics.

Broadly speaking, these Psalms are distinguished by their *prophetic* character. The theme of Ps. l, which is a typical Psalm of Asaph, conspicuous for its vigour and originality, is the message reiterated by the prophets from Samuel onward, that merely formal sacrifices are worthless in the sight of God; and the following features occur with sufficient frequency to be regarded as characteristic of the collection[1].

[1] Stähelin, who is followed by Bishop Perowne, reckons among the characteristics of these Psalms the interchange of the Divine names Jehovah and Elōhīm, and observes that Jehovah generally occurs towards the end of a Psalm where it passes into supplication. But if the predominant use of Elōhīm in the Elohistic collection is due to the hand of an editor (*Introd.* p. xli), the interchange cannot be set

(1) Like the prophets, they represent God as *the Judge*. Ps. l describes Him as coming to judge His people, demanding spiritual service, and rebuking unbelief. Pss. lxxv, lxxvi celebrate a signal judgement upon some blasphemous and insolent enemy of His people, probably Sennacherib. Ps. lxxxii represents Him as the Judge of judges, calling them to account for malversation of their office. And though God is not expressly called the Judge in Pss. lxxiii, lxxviii, lxxxi, the judgements of God as exhibited in life and history for encouragement and warning form the subject of these Psalms. Of course the representation of God as the Judge is not confined to these Psalms, but it is so prominent in them as to constitute a distinctive feature.

(2) As in the prophets, God Himself is frequently introduced as the speaker, and that not merely by the way, but in solemn, judicial utterances. See l, lxxv, lxxxi, lxxxii. Comp. Ps. lx. 6 ff. in the Davidic group.

(3) The didactic use of history is also a prophetical feature, for it was the function of prophecy not only to foretell the future, but to interpret the past. It is in the Psalms of Asaph that we first meet with frequent references to the ancient history of Israel. The allusion to the legislation at Sinai in Ps. l is merely general; but in lxxiv. 12 ff., lxxvii. 10 ff., lxxx. 8 ff., lxxxi. 5 ff., lxxxiii. 9 ff., the past history of the nation is appealed to for encouragement or warning, and Ps. lxxviii is entirely devoted to the 'parable' of Israel's history from the Exodus to the Building of the Temple. Such references are not found in Book i, and are rare in Book ii (xliv. 1 ff., lxvi. 5 ff., lxviii); in the later books however they are more frequent (xcv. 8 ff., ciii. 7; cv; cvi; cxiv; cxxxii; cxxxv; cxxxvi).

(4) Another feature, springing out of the last, is the fre-

down as a peculiarity either of the Psalms of Asaph or of those of the sons of Korah.

El, 'God', and *Elyōn*, 'the Most High', occur with somewhat greater relative frequency, but the former is distributed over the whole Psalter, and the latter over the first four Books of it. In Book v it occurs only in cvii. 11. *Adōnāi*, 'Lord' (which however may often be due only to an editor or scribe, the word read in place of JHVH being actually written instead of it) occurs but six times, while in lxviii alone it occurs seven times, and in lxxxvi seven times.

quency with which the relation of Jehovah to Israel is expressed by the figure of the Shepherd and His flock. It recalls Jehovah's guidance of His people through the wilderness, and conveys the assurance that He will yet seek the lost and gather the scattered and guide them back into their own land. See lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52, cp. 70—72; lxxix. 13; lxxx. 1. It may be noted that this is a favourite figure with the prophets Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

(5) Connected with the tendency to look back to the early history of Israel may be the use of the combinations Jacob and Joseph (lxxvii. 15), Joseph and Israel (lxxx. 1; lxxxi. 4, 5); cp. lxxviii. 67, 68. Cp. Am. v. 6, 15; vi. 6; Ob. 18; Zech. x. 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 19; xlvii. 13. It seems to express the idea that the division of the nation is intolerable, and that the reunion of Israel is necessary to its full restoration. In this too the Asaphite Psalms agree with the prophets, who from the time of Amos onward predict the ultimate reunion of the nation.

The Asaphite Psalms are almost entirely *national* Psalms, of intercession, thanksgiving, warning, and instruction. The purely personal element is scarcely found among them. In the Psalms which have the most individual character (lxxiii, lxxvii) the Psalmist speaks as the representative of a class, and the circumstances which cause him perplexity are social or national, not personal.

As regards the date of the Psalms in this group, some belong to the period of the monarchy (lxxv, lxxvi); some to the Exile (lxxiv, lxxix, lxxx); and some perhaps to the post-exilic period. But the predominant impression gained from reading the collection as a whole is that of a cry out of the Exile, pleading that God will visit and restore His people. Psalms of thanksgiving for past deliverances, such as lxxv, lxxvi, lxxxi, follow Psalms of supplication, as reminders of the marvellous works wrought by God for His people in times past, and pledges that He can and will once more deliver them. That the collection contains Maccabaean Psalms appears to the present writer improbable, in spite of the general opinion to the contrary. See *Introd.*, p. xxxv, and the introduction to Ps. lxxiv.

PSALM LXXIII.

This Psalm is a touching confession of faith sorely tried but finally victorious. It falls into two equal divisions: in the first, the Psalmist relates his temptation; in the second, the conquest of his doubts.

i. He had all but lost belief in God's goodness towards the righteous (1, 2), as he gazed with envy on the prosperity and influence of the wicked, who seem to enjoy immunity from sickness and trouble, and go on unchecked in a career of pride and violence and blasphemy, seducing the mass of men to follow them in denying God's rule in the world (3—11). He was tempted to think that all his endeavours after holiness had been worse than wasted labour, for they had only brought him suffering (12—14).

ii. He felt that to proclaim such a view of life would have been an act of treachery towards his fellow-Israelites, but the more he pondered on the problem, the more cruel did it seem (15, 16), until in the Temple the truth was revealed to him, that all the pomp of the wicked is but a hollow show, doomed to sudden and irreparable destruction (17—20). To envy it was indeed irrational stupidity, when in the fellowship and guidance and favour of God he possessed the highest good of which man is capable (21—26). For desertion of God leads to death; drawing near to Him is happiness (27, 28).

The double problem of the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous weighed heavily on the minds of many in ancient Israel, who only knew of this world as the scene of God's dealings with men, and missed the clear evidence of God's sovereign justice which they desired to see in the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked. In Ps. xxxvii we have a simple exhortation to patience and faith in view of the prosperity of the wicked, for the triumph of the wicked will be short-lived, while the reward of the righteous will be sure and abiding. In Ps. xlix the impotence and the transitoriness of wealth are insisted on, and contrasted with God's care for the righteous and the final triumph of righteousness. In this Psalm the problem is still approached from the side of the prosperity of the wicked, though there is a side-glance at the sufferings of the righteous (*v.* 14). It represents a deeper and probably later stage of thought: the difficulty has become more acute, and the solution is more complete; for the Psalmist is led to recognise not only the instability of worldly greatness, but the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God as man's highest good. In the Book of Job the problem is approached from the side of the suffering of the righteous, but it is fully discussed in its manifold aspects. A further step is made towards the conclusion implicitly contained in the faith of this Psalm, that this world is but one act in the great drama of life.

Whether the Psalmist in *vv.* 24 ff. looks beyond this life or not, is a question of interpretation on which opinion will probably always be divided. But it is clear, as Delitzsch observes, that he does not rise from pointing to the retribution which awaits the wicked in this world, to anticipate a solution of the contradictions of life in the world beyond,

and the exceeding glory which infinitely outweighs the sufferings of this present time still lies beyond his horizon. But the dimmer his view of a future life, the more wonderful is the triumphant faith, which surrenders all and cleaves to God, and the pure love, which counts all in the universe as nothing in comparison of Him.

It is impossible to speak with confidence as to the date of the Psalm. It does not belong to the Exile, for the Temple was standing (*v.* 17). The problem was debated in pre-exilic times (Jer. xii. 1 ff.; Hab. i. 2 ff.); as well as after the Return (Ps. xciv. 3 ff.; xcii. 7 ff.; Mal. iii. 13 ff.; Ecclesiastes viii. 11 ff.; &c.). The relation of the Psalm to Job (cp. especially ch. xxi) and Proverbs (xxiii. 17, 18; &c.) does not enable us to fix its date. It should be noted that here, as in Pss. xxxvii, xlix, the thoughts and language of the 'Wisdom' or religious philosophy of Israel, find a place in the Psalter.

A Psalm of Asaph.

Truly God *is* good to Israel, 73
Even to such as are of a clean heart.
But *as for* me, my feet were almost gone; 2
My steps had well nigh slipt.
For I was envious at the foolish, 3
When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.

1—14. Faith tried by the sight of the prosperity of the wicked.

1, 2. The Psalmist begins by stating the conclusion to which he had been led through the trial of his faith.

1. *Truly*] It is possible to render with R.V. marg., *Only good is God.* Though He permits His people to suffer, He is wholly loving-kindness toward them. Cp. Lam. iii. 25. But it is preferable to render with R.V. text, **Surely.** The particle *ak* in this connexion expresses the idea *Nay but after all.*

such as are of a clean heart] R.V., **such as are pure in heart.** 'Israel' is thus defined as the true Israel of God. To them, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, He manifests His goodness (Ex. xxxiii. 19). Purity of heart and life is the condition of admission to His presence (xxiv. 4 ff.), of 'seeing God' (Matt. v. 8).

2. But the Psalmist had almost lost his faith in God's goodness. He had as it were all but swerved from the right path (xliv. 18); all but lost his footing in the slippery places of life's journey (xvii. 5).

3—9. The cause: the unbroken prosperity of the godless. Cp. Job's indignant complaint, xxi. 7 ff.

3. *I was envious*] Cp. xxxvii. 1; and the repeated warnings of the Book of Proverbs, iii. 31, xxiii. 17, xxiv. 1, 19.

the foolish] Rather as R.V., **the arrogant,** a word denoting boastful blustering presumption. Cp. v. 5; lxxv. 4.

the prosperity] Lit. *the peace.* Cp. Job xxi. 9, "their houses are in peace without fear."

For *there are* no bands in their death: 4
But their strength *is* firm.
They *are* not in trouble *as other* men; 5
Neither are they plagued like *other* men.
Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; 6
Violence covereth them *as* a garment.
Their eyes stand out with fatness: 7
They have more than heart could wish.
They are corrupt, and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression: 8
They speak loftily.

4. *no bands &c.*] The meaning may be that they are not bound and delivered over like "pale captives" to premature death (cp. the paraphrase of P.B.V. "they are in no peril of death"): or that they have no torments of pain and disease (R.V. marg. *pangs*) in their death, but have a peaceful end to a prosperous life. Cp. Job xxi. 13, 23.

But the mention of death seems premature, and the rhythm of the Hebrew is halting: sense and rhythm both gain by a simple emendation which is adopted by most editors:

For they have no torments:
Sound and stalwart is their body.

5, 6. **They have no share in the misery of mortals;**
Neither are they plagued along with other men:
Therefore pride is as a chain about their neck;
Violence covereth them as a garment.

Though "man is born for misery" (Job v. 7), they escape the common lot of humanity, and consequently their pride and brutality are unchecked. For the metaphors cp. Prov. i. 9; Ps. cix. 18. Chains were worn on the neck in Eastern countries for ornament by men as well as women, and also as badges of office (Gen. xli. 42; Dan. v. 7).

7. According to the Massoretic Text the first line describes the insolent look of these sleek-faced villains. Cp. Job xv. 27. But the LXX and Syr. represent a different reading, which suits the probable sense of the next line better, and gets rid of a grammatical anomaly. Render

Their iniquity cometh forth from the heart:
The imaginations of their mind overflow.

The word for *heart* is the same as that in xvii. 10, which according to Robertson Smith (*Religion of the Semites*, p. 360) means properly *the midriff*. The verse is thus a continuation of *v.* 6. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"; and no fear or shame controls their utterance of their thoughts. Cp. Jer. v. 28.

8. The rhythm seems to require a different division of the verse from that given by the Massoretic accentuation, thus;

They scoff, and talk of evil:
Of oppression do they talk from on high.

Not the commandments of God (Deut. vi. 7; xi. 19) but their own

9 They set their mouth against the heavens,
And their tongue walketh through the earth.
10 Therefore his people return hither:
And waters of a full *cup* are wrung out to them.
11 And they say, How doth God know?
And is there knowledge in the most High?

nefarious designs are the subject of their conversation: they talk "as if they were gods and their words oracles." Cp. Is. xiv. 13. P.B.V. "their talking is against the most High" (Great Bible from Münster) is untenable.

9. The A.V. gives a good sense: they blaspheme God and dictate to men. Cp. Dan. vii. 25. But probably the R.V. is right in rendering,

They have set their mouth in the heavens.

The clause expands the words of the preceding verse "from on high." They make an impious claim of divine authority, and dictate to men as though the earth belonged to them.

10, 11. The mass of men are carried away by their evil example.

10. A difficult verse. The general sense appears to be that attracted by the prosperity and pretensions of the wicked a crowd of imitators turn to follow them, and in their company drink to the dregs the cup of sinful pleasure. The Psalmist's temptation is intensified as he contemplates the popularity of the wicked. Cp. xlix. 13. The details however are obscure. *Therefore*, because they are deluded by the extravagant pretensions of the wicked. The pronoun *his* is commonly explained to refer to the wicked regarded as a whole, or to some conspicuous leader among them. The context hardly allows of its reference to God. But the LXX and Syr. may preserve the true reading '**my** people,' the Psalmist speaking with sorrow of his deluded countrymen. *Return* should rather be *turn; hither*, to the wicked and their pernicious ways.

The reading of the *Kthībh* given in R.V. marg., *he will bring back his people hither*, finds no support from the Ancient Versions, and admits of no satisfactory explanation. *Waters of fulness are drained by them* is a metaphor for the enjoyment of pleasure; or possibly for imbibing pernicious principles. Cp. Job xv. 16; and the saying of Jose ben Joezer, "Let thy house be a meeting house for the wise...and drink their words with thirstiness." *Pirqe Aboth*, i. 4, cp. 12.

11. The speakers in this verse are not 'the wicked,' but the deluded mass of their followers described in *v.* 10. They adopt the language of their leaders, and question God's knowledge of their doings in particular, and even His omniscience in general. Cp. x. 4, 11, 13. The names of God—*El*, the Mighty One, *'Elyōn*, the Supreme Ruler of the Universe—are chosen so as to accentuate the blasphemy of their scepticism.

12—14. The Psalmist's temptation as he contemplated the scene. Some commentators regard these verses as the continuation of the speech in *v.* 11, giving the thoughts of the followers of the wicked, the

Behold, these *are* the ungodly, 12
Who prosper in the world; they increase *in* riches.
Verily I have cleansed my heart *in* vain, 13
And washed my hands in innocency.
For all the day long have I been plagued, 14
And chastened every morning.
If I say, I will speak thus; 15
Behold, I should offend *against* the generation of thy children.

speaker in *vv.* 13, 14 being any individual among them. But it is preferable to regard them as the words of the Psalmist himself, expressing the thoughts which he had been tempted to indulge. (1) The form of the sentence, *Behold, such* &c., points to a summing up (cp. Job v. 27; viii. 19, 20; xviii. 21); (2) 'the wicked' is a more natural designation for the Psalmist than for their own followers to use; (3) there is nothing to shew that the speaker in *v.* 15 is another than the speaker in *vv.* 13, 14; (4) the LXX (followed by the P.B.V.) inserts *And I said* at the beginning of *v.* 13.

12. Behold, such are the wicked!
And being always at ease they have gotten much substance.

At ease is a favourite word in Job: e.g. iii. 26; xii. 6; xvi. 12; xx. 20; xxi. 23; cp. Jer. xii. 1.

13. *Verily*] The same word *ak* as in *v.* 1. R.V. **Surely in vain have I cleansed my heart.** If the wicked prosper thus, his endeavours after holiness have been wasted. There is no reward for the righteous: nay (*v.* 14) his own reward has been chastisement. He would not have claimed to be sinless any more than Job (cp. Prov. xx. 9), but he has a good conscience. For the second line cp. Ps. xxvi. 6. The metaphor is derived from the ceremonies of the Levitical ritual. See Ex. xxx. 17 ff.; cp. Deut. xxi. 6.

14. *For* &c.] Apparently the recompence of his piety has been continual chastisement. The wicked are not plagued (*v.* 5), but for him there has been constant renewal of divinely inflicted sufferings. Cp. xxxix. 10, 11; Job vii. 18.

15—28. Faith triumphant in the conviction of an ultimate judgement and the consciousness of the supreme blessedness of fellowship with God.

15—17. Instead of parading his doubts, he wrestled with them until in the sanctuary the solution of them was revealed to him.

15. If I had said, I will speak thus;
Behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of thy children (R.V.).

If he had paraded his perplexities, and made open profession of the wicked man's creed (Job xxi. 15), he would have been faithless to the

16 When I thought to know this,
It *was* too painful for me;
17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God;
Then understood I their end.
18 Surely thou didst set them in slippery *places:*
Thou castedst them down into destruction.
19 How are they *brought* into desolation, as *in* a moment!
They are utterly consumed with terrors.
20 As a dream when *one* awaketh;
So, O Lord, when *thou* awakest, thou shalt despise their image.

interests of God's family. In the O.T. Israel as a people is called Jehovah's son (Ex. iv. 22) or Jehovah's sons (Deut. xiv. 1), but the individual does not yet claim for himself the title of son except in an official and representative capacity (ii. 7). The recognition of that closer personal relation is reserved for the N.T. (Gal. iii. 26).

16, 17. And I kept thinking how to understand this:
It was misery in mine eyes:
Until I went into the sanctuary of God,
And considered their latter end.

As he kept pondering how to reconcile the facts of experience with the revealed truth of God's character and promises, the sight of the world's disorder seemed intolerable, until in the Temple, the place of God's Presence, where He reveals His power and glory (lxiii. 2), he was enabled to realise the transitoriness of the prosperity of the wicked, and their nothingness in the sight of God. *The sanctuary* (lit. as in lxviii. 35, *sanctuaries*) is to be understood literally: the explanation of it as "the sacred mysteries of God's Providence" (cp. Wisdom ii. 22) is attractive but too fanciful.

18—20. The awful fate of the wicked is the *negative* solution of the problem.

18. Surely in slippery places dost thou appoint their lot:
Suddenly dost thou cast them down into ruin.

Surely, as in *vv.* 1, 13, means 'after all.' They are set in dangerous places where they will stumble and fall. Cp. xxxv. 6; Jer. xxiii. 12. The word for *ruin* occurs elsewhere only in lxxiv. 3.

19. How are they become a desolation in a moment!
They are at an end, they are consumed with terrors.

The word *terrors*, found here only in the Psalter, is a favourite word in Job in similar connexions (xviii. 11, 14, &c.).

20. *As a dream*] Cp. Job xx. 8; Is. xxix. 7.

when thou awakest] **When thou arousest thyself**, a different word from that in the previous line, used in vii. 6, xxxv. 23, of God bestirring Himself to judgement. The word may mean *in the city* (R.V. marg. and the Ancient Versions); but this rendering yields no satisfactory

Thus my heart was grieved, 21
And I was pricked *in* my reins.
So foolish *was* I, and ignorant: 22
I was *as* a beast before thee.
Nevertheless I *am* continually with thee: 23
Thou hast holden *me* by my right hand.
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, 24
And afterwards receive me *to* glory.

sense: the paraphrase of P.B.V., 'so shalt thou make their image to vanish out of the city,' is quite unjustifiable.

their image] Cp. xxxix. 6, note. All their brave pomp is a phantom, a mere counterfeit of reality, an *eidolon*; and God rates it at its true value.

21, 22. The Psalmist's confession of his error.

21. *Thus*] R.V. **For.** If this rendering is adopted, the connexion is with the general sense of the preceding verses:—'I failed to perceive the truth until my eyes were opened in the sanctuary, *for*' &c. But it is better to render:

When my heart grew sour,
And I was pricked in my reins,
I was brutish and ignorant,
I became a mere beast with thee.

He confesses the folly of his former impatience. He had lowered himself to the level of a beast (xlix. 10), for what distinguishes man from the lower animals is his power of communion with God. *Behēmōth*, rendered *beast*, might be taken, as in Job xl. 15, to mean 'the hippopotamus,' as an emblem for 'a monster of stupidity,' but the more general rendering is preferable. The reins (*renes*, the kidneys) were regarded as the seat of the emotions. Cp. vii. 9.

23—26. The *positive* solution of the Psalmist's perplexity: the only true and abiding happiness is to be found in fellowship with God.

23. *Nevertheless*] Lit., *But as for me, I am* &c. Render, **Whereas I am** &c. He contrasts his real position of fellowship with God with his former delusion and also with the insecurity of the wicked.

thou hast holden &c.] Better as R.V., **thou hast holden my right hand.** Cp. lxiii. 8.

24. *with thy counsel*] Tacitly he contrasts the course of his life with that of the wicked, for counsel is an attribute of the Divine Wisdom (Prov. viii. 14), which the wicked despise (Prov. i. 25, 30).

to *glory*] Or, *with glory* (R.V. marg.); or, as the word is often translated, *with honour*.

The meaning of this verse is much disputed. Can we suppose that the words bore for the Psalmist the sense which they naturally bear for the Christian in the fuller light of the Gospel? Do they express his faith that God's guidance of him through this life will be followed by

25 Whom have I in heaven *but thee?*
And *there is* none upon earth *that* I desire besides thee.

reception into the glory of His Presence after death? Or do they simply express his confidence that God will guide him safely through his present troubles, so that in the end honour, not shame, will be his lot, and his acceptableness to God will be demonstrated to the world? Delitzsch finds in them the larger hope, and thinks that here, as in xlix. 15, there is a reference to the assumption of Enoch (Gen. v. 24); but he admits that there was as yet no divine promise holding out the prospect of a heavenly triumph to the struggling church on earth upon which such a hope could rest. If the Psalmist possessed this definite hope, we might have expected that he would lay more stress upon it as affording a solution of his perplexities. Such a hope moreover would rise far above the general level of the O.T. view of a future life, at any rate till the latest period. And no parallel can be quoted for the absolute use of 'glory' in the sense of 'heavenly' or 'eternal glory.' Elsewhere in the Psalter *kābōd* is used in the sense of 'honour' (lxii. 7; lxxxiv. 11; cxii. 9; cxlix. 5); and in Job and Proverbs, to which it is natural to turn for the elucidation of the language of a Psalm so closely connected with the reflections of the 'Wise,' it bears the same sense. It is often coupled with riches and life, and contrasted with shame. See Job xix. 9; xxix. 20; Prov. iii. 16, 35; viii. 18; xv. 33; xxi. 21; xxii. 4.

It seems therefore that as the Psalmist anticipates that judgement will overtake the wicked in this world, so he looks for such a deliverance and advancement in this world as will visibly demonstrate that he is the object of God's loving favour, and prove that "there is a reward for the righteous." Cp. lxxi. 20, 21. This life is for him the scene of God's dealings with men, and a full vindication of God's moral government is looked for within the limits of individual experience. See further in *Introd.* pp. lxxv ff.: and consult Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 246, and Schultz's *O. T. Theology*, ch. xlii.

It may be noted that the LXX, followed of course by the Vulg., sees no reference here to a future life, but renders, "In thy counsel didst thou guide me, and with glory didst thou receive me."

If this view is correct, the Psalmist's faith is even grander than if he looked forward to glorification in a future life. He rises victorious over the world of sense and appearance in the inward certainty of the reality of his communion with God, and the absolute conviction that this is the highest good and the truest happiness of which man is capable. Such a knowledge is eternal life; and the possibility of it is in itself a pledge that the communion thus begun cannot suddenly be interrupted by death, but must be carried on to an ever fuller perfection.

25. *But thee* is rightly supplied in the first line, which receives its completion and explanation from the second. The idea which logically is one is divided into two clauses for the sake of the poetical rhythm.

beside thee] Lit. *with thee.* If I have THEE, there is none else in heaven and earth whom I desire. Thou art my only good and

My flesh and my heart faileth: 26
But God *is* the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.
For lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: 27
Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee.
But *it is* good for me to draw near to God: 28
I have put my trust in the Lord GOD,
That *I* may declare all thy works.

source of happiness in the whole universe. Cp. xvi. 2, R.V., "Thou art my Lord; I have no good beyond thee."

26. *God* is *the strength of my heart*] Lit., **the rock of my heart.** Though bodily and mental powers fail, God is his sure refuge in every danger (lxii. 2, 6, 7), the possession which cannot be taken from him (xvi. 5; cxlii. 5). Never, now that he has come to his right mind, will he look for any other refuge (Is. xliv. 8), or envy those "whose portion in life is of the world" (xvii. 14).

27, 28. The final contrast of death and life.

27. *they that are far from thee*] Better, **they that go far from thee,** Vulg., *qui elongant se a te.* Desertion of God the source of life (xxxvi. 9) can lead only to ruin and death.

all them that go a whoring from thee] All Israelites who are faithless to the covenant with God. The figure of marriage is used to express the closeness of Jehovah's relation to His people (Hos. ii. 2 ff.; Is. liv. 5, 6; and often), and consequently apostasy is spoken of as infidelity to the marriage vow.

28. But as for me, to draw near to God is good for me:
In the Lord Jehovah have I made my refuge;
That I may speak of all thy works.

Emphatically he contrasts himself with those who 'go far from God.' Once he had been tempted to ask what profit there was in serving God, and openly to speak (*v.* 15) of his doubts: but now he can find an endless theme for praise in the dealings of God with the righteous and the wicked. The LXX reads, "that I may declare all thy praises in the gates of the daughter of Sion," as in ix. 14; and this may preserve the original reading, for the present Heb. text sounds incomplete. The P.B.V. "to speak of all thy works in the gates of the daughter of Sion" combines the LXX with the Heb.

PSALM LXXIV.

This Psalm and Ps. lxxix are closely connected in thought and language[1], and reflect the same historical situation. If they are not

[1] Comp. lxxiv. 1, 9, 10 with lxxix. 5, *how long, for ever*: lxxiv. 3, 7 with lxxix. 1, the desecration of the sanctuary: lxxiv. 1 with lxxix. 5, God's wrath: lxxiv. 1 with lxxix. 13, *sheep of thy pasture*: lxxiv. 2 with lxxix. 1, thine inheritance: lxxiv. 10, 18, 22, 23 with lxxix 4, 12, the reproaches of the enemy: lxxiv. 7, 10, 18, 21 with lxxix. 6, 9, God's *name*.

from the same pen, they must at least belong to the same period, and must be considered together.

The circumstances under which they were written stand out clearly. The holy land has been overrun by heathen enemies; the Temple has been desecrated and burnt to the ground; Jerusalem is in ruins; numbers of Israelites have been slaughtered, and their bodies left unburied; Israel is the scorn of neighbouring nations; the outward ordinances of religion are suspended; Jehovah seems permanently to have cast off His people, and its fortunes seem destined to know no recovery; no one can foresee the end of its humiliation.

It has generally been thought that there are two periods, and only two, to which this description can apply:—the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans in B.C. 586, and the oppression of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes in B.C. 170—165. Almost all commentators who admit the existence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Psalter at all agree in referring these Psalms to the latter occasion, and we may consider it first. Antiochus IV, surnamed Epiphanes, became king of Syria in B.C. 175. After his second expedition to Egypt, B.C. 170, he invaded Jerusalem, plundered the Temple of its treasures, and massacred thousands of the people. "All the house of Jacob was covered with confusion" (1 Macc. i. 20—28). Two years later, after his fourth Egyptian campaign, Antiochus sent a force under his general Apollonius to occupy Jerusalem. He seized the city by treachery, plundered it and set it on fire, massacred many of the people, sold many women and children as slaves, and fortifying the city of David, established a Syrian garrison there (1 Macc. i. 29 ff.). Antiochus next resolved to stamp out the Jewish religion. He promulgated an edict prohibiting the practice of all its distinctive ceremonies upon pain of death, and ordering the Jews to take part in heathen rites. The Temple was desecrated; an idol altar set up on the altar, and sacrifices offered upon it to Zeus Olympios; all the copies of the Law that could be found were destroyed or defaced, and their possession was made a capital offence. Many Israelites turned apostate, but many preferred death to the abnegation of their religion. The resistance inaugurated by Mattathias at Modin was crowned with success. Under the heroic leadership of his son Judas the Jews recovered their liberty, and in B.C. 165 the Temple was cleansed and re-dedicated with great rejoicings (1 Macc. iv. 36 ff.).

In many respects these Psalms appear remarkably to reflect the circumstances of this period; they illustrate and are illustrated by the narrative in 1 and 2 Maccabees in a number of details; and in particular the complaints put into the mouth of Mattathias (1 Macc. ii. 6 ff.) and Judas (2 Macc. viii. 2 ff.) present many points of resemblance. The special arguments urged in favour of the Maccabaean date are (1) that the absence of prophets spoken of in lxxiv. 9 was a marked characteristic of the Maccabaean times (1 Macc. iv. 46; ix. 27; xiv. 41), whereas Jeremiah and Ezekiel survived the destruction of Jerusalem for many years, and the former had predicted the duration of the captivity: (2) that the existence of synagogues (lxxiv. 8) points to a late period of Jewish history: (3) that the language of the Psalms implies that Israel was suffering a *religious* persecution (lxxiv. 10, 18, 22): (4) that the 'signs'

of the heathen in the Temple and the absence of Israel's 'signs' (lxxiv. 4, 9) clearly refer to the introduction of idolatrous emblems and the attempt to destroy the Jewish religion.

Upon these grounds these Psalms have very generally been assigned to the period between B.C. 170 and B.C. 165, or more particularly between the desecration of the Temple in B.C. 168 and its re-dedication in B.C. 165. At first sight the arguments appear to be convincing. But it has already been pointed out in the introduction to Ps. xliv that the history of the growth of the Psalter makes the presence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Elohistic collection highly improbable. In view of this improbability it is necessary further to examine the arguments alleged in proof of the Maccabaean date. Now (1) though Jeremiah and Ezekiel lived for several years after the destruction of Jerusalem, the complaint of lxxiv. 9 is intelligible, if the Psalm was written, as it may well have been, after their death. It finds at least a partial parallel in Lam. ii. 9. Further, though the question 'How long' may seem strange in the face of Jeremiah's prediction of the duration of the Captivity, it could still be asked even after the first Return (Zech. i. 12). (2) It will be shewn in the notes on lxxiv. 8 that the LXX, the oldest authority for the text and interpretation of the passage, finds no allusion in it to synagogues, but understands it of the solemn feasts, the suspension of which is deplored in Lamentations as one of the great calamities of the Exile. (3) Every war against Israel was in a sense a religious war, and the language is no more than might have been used with reference to any occasion when the humiliation of Israel gave the heathen opportunity to speak contemptuously of Israel's God. (4) The 'signs' of the enemy may equally well mean the military ensigns of the Chaldeans, and the absence of Israel's 'signs' may refer to the suspension of festivals and other outward ordinances of religion.

Thus the special arguments for the Maccabaean date break down upon examination. But further, there are allusions which fit the earlier date better than the later, and there are some marked features of the Maccabaean period which are conspicuously absent.

(1) The description of the burning and destruction of the Temple and the demolition of the city agrees with the account of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans (2 Kings xxv. 9, 10), whereas in the Syrian troubles only the gates of the Temple were burnt and some of the subordinate buildings destroyed (1 Macc. iv. 38), and though the city had suffered, it does not seem to have been laid in ruins.

(2) The *prolonged* desolation of the city and humiliation of Israel points decidedly to the earlier occasion. The interval from the outrage of Antiochus to the re-dedication of the Temple was only three years, and even from his first invasion of Jerusalem only five years, a short period, surely, to account for the strong expressions in Ps. lxxiv.

(3) The mockery of the neighbouring peoples was a conspicuous feature at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem (Ps. cxxxvii; Ezek. xxv). (4) The parallels with Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Ezekiel are at least as striking as those with 1 Maccabees[1].

[1] Comp. lxxiv. 4 with Lam. ii. 6, 7; lxxiv. 7 with Lam. ii. 2; lxxiv. 9 with Lam. ii. 6, 9; lxxix. 6, 7 with Jer. x. 25; lxxiv. 1, lxxix. 13 with Jer. xxiii. 1; and further references in the notes.

Arguments from silence are no doubt precarious, but it must be noted that these Psalms contain no reference to some prominent features of the Maccabaean times. There is no allusion to the intrigues which had disgraced the hierarchy, or to the religious divisions of the time and the apostasy of many of the people, or to the deliberate attempt of Antiochus to enforce idolatry and destroy the Jewish religion.

On the whole, then, the view which seems most in accordance with the evidence is that these Psalms were written some fifteen or twenty years after the destruction of Jerusalem, about the same time as the Lamentations. The author might have been an eye-witness of the destruction of the Temple, which he describes so graphically, while at the same time the exile had lasted long enough to make it seem as though, in spite of Jeremiah's predictions of restoration, God had permanently rejected His people. This hypothesis we may at any rate take as the basis of our study, referring to the Book of Maccabees only for illustration.

It has been suggested that these Psalms, though originally written with reference to the destruction of Jerusalem, were re-touched to adapt them to the circumstances of the later struggle. The possibility may be borne in mind, but the conjecture does not admit of proof. Naturally the Psalms would have been favourites at that time, and this may account for many of the coincidences of thought and expression.

It may indeed be the case that it has been too hastily assumed by the majority of commentators that these Psalms must refer to one or other of the periods above mentioned. Ewald would connect them, together with xliv, lx, lxxx, lxxxv, with disasters which befel the restored community in the earlier part of the fifth century B.C., to which reference is made in Neh. i. 3. But it must be noted that Nehemiah's concern is for the city only: there is no mention of any desecration of the Temple.

Robertson Smith (*Old Test. in Jewish Ch.*, ed. 2, p. 438) prefers Ewald's earlier view, and connects them with the rebellion of the Jews under Artaxerxes Ochus (circa B.C. 350), which was put down with great severity. Our knowledge of the history of that period is, however, extremely scanty, and the hypothesis lacks evidence.

Psalm lxxiv may be divided into three stanzas, thus:

i. The Psalmist expostulates with God for abandoning His people, and entreats Him to come to their help, enforcing his appeal by a vivid description of the havoc which the enemy had wrought in the sanctuary, and the despair which is seizing upon Israel (1—9).

ii. He renews his expostulation, bidding God remember that His honour is at stake, and recalling, at once by way of pleading with God and for his own consolation, the sovereignty of Israel's King in history and in nature (10—17).

iii. Repeating the arguments he has already used, he once more urgently entreats God not to abandon His people to the mercy of their foes, or any longer to endure the insults which are heaped upon Him daily (18—23).

Maschil of Asaph.

O God, why hast thou cast *us* off for ever? 74
Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture?
Remember thy congregation, *which* thou hast purchased of 2
old;
The rod of thine inheritance, *which* thou hast redeemed;
This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt.
Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations; 3
Even all *that* the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary.
Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations; 4

On *Maschil* see *Introd.* p. xviii.

1—3. An appeal to God, Who seems to have abandoned and forgotten the people and city of His choice.

1. *for ever*] God's rejection of His people seems to have become permanent. The same thought recurs in *vv.* 3, 10, 19, lxxix. 5. Cp. Lam. v. 20; Ps. xliv. 23; Lam. iii. 31.

smoke] A metaphor for the outward signs of the fire of wrath. Cp. xviii. 8; lxxx. 4; Lam. ii. 3, 4.

the sheep of thy pasture] The exact phrase recurs only in lxxix. 13; c. 3; Jer. xxiii. 1; Ezek. xxxiv. 31; but cp. xcv. 7. The title implies that Israel has a right to claim God's loving care in virtue of His relation to it: a relation which *v.* 2 points out was initiated by God Himself. The representation of God as Israel's shepherd is common. See lxxx. 1; lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52; Is. xl. 11; Jer. xxxi. 10; Ezek. xxxiv. 11 ff.

2. *Remember*] Cp. *vv.* 18, 22; Lam. v. 1; Is. lxii. 6.

purchased...redeemed] Reminiscences of the Song of Moses (Ex. xv. 13, 16). Cp. lxxvii. 15; lxxviii. 35; Deut. xxxii. 6.

the rod &c.] Render with R.V.,

Which thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance.

The nation is called a *tribe*, as in Am. iii. 1 it is called a *family*. So too in Jer. x. 16 (=li. 19); cp. Is. lxiii. 17.

this mount Zion] Omit *this*: the pronoun here serves for the relative.

dwelt] Cp. lxviii. 16. The verb is that from which later Judaism derived the term *Shechinah* to denote the abiding Presence of God among His people.

3. *Lift up thy feet*] Bestir Thyself: come in might and majesty to visit and deliver. *the perpetual desolations*] R.V. **the perpetual ruins**: a word found elsewhere only in lxxiii. 18. Cp. the threat, Jer. xxv. 9, and the promises, Is. lviii. 12, lxi. 4.

even *all* &c.] Better as R.V., **All the evil that the enemy hath done in the sanctuary**; or R.V. marg., *The enemy hath wrought all evil.*

4—9. A graphic picture of the desecration of the Temple by the heathen enemies of Israel.

4. Render, **Thine adversaries roared in the midst of thy meeting-**

They set up their ensigns *for* signs.
5 *A man* was famous according as he had lifted up
Axes upon the thick trees.
6 But now they break down the carved work thereof
At once with axes and hammers.
7 They have cast fire into thy sanctuary,
They have defiled *by casting down* the dwelling place of thy name to the ground.

place. *Mō'ēd* may mean either the place or the time at which God meets His people, as of old He met them at "the tent of meeting" (Ex. xxix. 42—44). Here probably the Temple is meant. Its courts were filled with heathen foes instead of reverent worshippers: they rang with wild shouts of triumph instead of the praises of Israel. Cp. Lam. ii. 6, 7.

they set up their ensigns for *signs*] Lit., *their signs as signs*. Probably their military ensigns or standards (Num. ii. 2) are meant. The erection of these in the Temple itself was a visible sign of its desecration, and of the completeness of the triumph of the heathen. Many commentators however suppose that religious emblems and ceremonies are meant, and those who regard this Psalm as Maccabaean suppose that the idolatrous altars erected and rites celebrated by command of Antiochus are referred to. See 1 Macc. i. 45—49, 54, 59, iii. 48.

5, 6. The R.V. gives the probable sense of these verses, but does not reproduce the pictorial tenses, which represent the work of destruction as though it were going on before the reader's eyes. Render:

They seem as men that lift up
Axes upon a thicket of trees.
And now all the carved work thereof together
They are battering down with hatchet and hammers.

The enemy are compared to wood-cutters hewing down a forest (Jer. xlvi. 22, 23); and the simile may have been suggested by the fact that the carved work on the Temple walls represented "palm trees and open flowers" (1 Kings vi. 29).

The P.B.V., "He that hewed timber afore out of the thick trees was known to bring it to an excellent work. But now they break down &c.," introduced into the Great Bible from Münster, gives a suggestive contrast between the skill of the artist and the vandalism of the destroyer; but the present Heb. text cannot bear this meaning.

7. They have set thy sanctuary on fire;
They have profaned the dwelling place of thy name even to the ground. (R.V.)

The verse appears to speak of a complete destruction of the Temple by fire. This was done by Nebuzaradan (2 Kings xxv. 9, 10) but not by the emissaries of Antiochus, for Judas found the main building standing, though the gates had been burned and the priests' chambers pulled down (1 Macc. iv. 38). Comp. the stress which Ezekiel lays on the desecration of the sanctuary (vii. 21, 22, 24). See also Lam. ii. 2.

They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together: 8
They have burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land.
We see not our signs: 9
There is no more any prophet:
Neither *is there* among us any that knoweth how long.
O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? 10

For *the dwellingplace of thy name* cp. Deut. xii. 11; xvi. 2, 6, 11, &c.; Jer. vii. 12; Ps. xxvi. 8.

8. They said in their heart, Let us crush them altogether:
They burned up all the meeting places of God in the land.

For the form of expression cp. lxxxiii. 4.

The interpretation of this verse is specially important in its bearing on the date of the Psalm. It would be a strong argument for the late date if it really contained an allusion to synagogues. Though the origin of these buildings for purposes of worship and instruction is hidden in obscurity, it can hardly have been earlier than the post-exilic period. (See Schürer, *Hist. of the Jewish People*, Div. ii. § 27, E.T. ii. ii. 54.) But it is doubtful whether there is any such allusion. The word translated *synagogues* is the same as that used in *v.* 4, meaning either *place* or *time of meeting*. In the plural it always has the latter meaning. Now if the Psalm were Maccabaean and the passage referred to synagogues, it might be expected that the LXX translators, working no long time afterwards, would have so understood it. But they do not; and apparently they had a different text before them, for they render: *Come, let us cause the feasts of the Lord to cease out of the land*. Similarly the Syriac. These versions then understand the words to refer to the festivals or solemn assemblies. Now the cessation of the festivals is one of the points mentioned in the Lamentations (i. 4; ii. 6) as a special calamity; and in Hos. ii. 11 the Heb. word presumed by the LXX here is used in the prediction of the cessation of religious festivals in the Captivity. This reading and interpretation suit the context. The stated festivals were among the 'signs,' the symbols of God's presence and favour, of which *v.* 9 speaks.

9. *our signs*] The outward and visible symbols of our religion, such as sabbath and festival, which God "had caused to be forgotten in Zion" (Lam. ii. 6). The sabbath is spoken of as a sign in Ex. xxxi. 13, 17; Ezek. xx. 12, 20. The words would of course be specially appropriate to the time at which Antiochus attempted to suppress all the distinctive ordinances of the Jewish religion (1 Macc. i. 45, 46, 60, 61). Note the contrast with the 'signs' of hostile domination, *v.* 4.

there is *no more any prophet*] A characteristic of the Maccabaean age (1 Macc. iv. 46; ix. 27; xiv. 41): but the complaints of the exile are not dissimilar (Lam. ii. 9; Ezek. vii. 26); and even after the Return the angel in Zechariah's vision (i. 12) asks 'How long?'

10, 11. Once more the Psalmist expostulates with God for His inaction.

10. *How long*] Taking up the last words of *v.* 9, the Psalmist begins

Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever?
11 Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?
Pluck *it* out of thy bosom.
12 For God *is* my King of old,
Working salvation in the midst of the earth.
13 Thou didst divide the sea by thy strength:
Thou brakest the heads of the dragons in the waters.
14 Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces,
And gavest him *to be* meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.

the second division of the Psalm with an appeal parallel to that in *vv.* 1—3. There he entreats God to have pity on His people's need, here to have regard to His own honour.

reproach...blaspheme] In act and word. Like the Assyrians, Is. x. 7 ff., xxxvii.; 23 ff.; and Syrians, Dan. vii. 8, 25; xi. 36; 1 Macc. ii. 6.

11. Why drawest thou back thy hand, even thy right hand? (Pluck it) out of thy bosom (and) consume (them).

The right hand which in days of old was stretched out to annihilate the Egyptians (Ex. xv. 12), is now as it were thrust idly into the folded garment. Cp. Lam. ii. 3.

12—17. Yet God's mighty works of Redemption and Creation attest His power to interpose for the deliverance of His people. Cp. lxxvii. 10 ff.

12. *For*] Better as R.V., **Yet**. In spite of His present inactivity God has been and still is Israel's King. The Psalmist speaks in the name of the nation. Cp. Ex. xv. 18; Ps. xliv. 4; Hab. i. 12.

salvation] Lit. *salvations*, manifold and great acts of deliverance.

in the midst of the earth] As in Ex. viii. 22, the phrase implies that His wonders are wrought in the sight of all the nations and attest His claim of universal sovereignty (lxxvii. 14).

13. *Thou*] *Vv.* 13, 14, 15, 17 all begin with an emphatic THOU; *v.* 16 with THINE. It is THOU and none other, Who didst and doest all these things. The Asaphite Psalms are full of references to the Exodus.

by thy strength] Cp. lxxvii. 14; Ex. xv. 13. *The dragons* or *sea monsters*, and *leviathan*, either the crocodile or some vague mythological monster, are symbolical of Egypt. Cp. Is. xxvii. 1; li. 9; Ezek. xxix. 3.

in the waters] Lit. *upon the waters*, the symbolical monsters being imagined as floating upon the surface of the water. The reference of course is to the destruction of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea.

14. *Thou brakest* &c. **Thou didst crush...thou didst give him** &c. The dead bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on the shore (Ex. xiv. 30) to be devoured by the wild beasts of the desert. Cp. Ezek. xxix. 3—5. For 'people' applied to animals cp. Prov. xxx. 25, 26.

Thou didst cleave the fountain and the flood: 15
Thou driedst up mighty rivers.
The day *is* thine, the night also *is* thine: 16
Thou hast prepared the light and the sun.
Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: 17
Thou hast made summer and winter.
Remember this, *that* the enemy hath reproached, O LORD, 18
And *that* the foolish people have blasphemed thy name.
O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude 19
of the wicked:
Forget not the congregation of thy poor for ever.
Have respect unto the covenant: 20

15. Thou didst cleave fountain and torrent:
Thou didst dry up perennial rivers.

God's omnipotence was shewn alike in cleaving the rock so that water flowed out (Ex. xvii. 6; Num. xx. 8; Ps. lxxviii. 15; Is. xlviii. 21), and in drying up the perennial stream of the Jordan (Josh. iii, iv. 23).

16, 17. All the fixed laws and ordinances of the natural world were established and are maintained by God.

16. *The day* &c.] **Thine is the day and the night is thine.**

the light and the sun] Possibly equivalent to 'the moon and the sun' (civ. 19); but more probably 'the luminaries and especially the sun.' Cp. Gen. i. 14, 16.

17. *the borders of the earth*] The divisions of land and sea (civ. 9; Job xxxviii. 8 ff.; Jer. v. 22), and the apportionment of the land among the nations (Deut. xxxii. 8; Acts xvii. 26).

18—23. Emboldened by his contemplation of the power of God in history and in nature the Psalmist returns to prayer.

18. *the foolish people*] R.V. **a foolish people.** The epithet denotes the moral perversity of opposition to God. Cp. xiv. 1, note. It is applied to the heathen in Deut. xxxii. 21.

19. The rendering of R.V., **O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the wild beast,** is preferable to that of R.V. marg., *O deliver not thy turtledove unto the greedy multitude.* The dove is an emblem of the defenceless people.

forget not &c.] **Forget not the family of thine afflicted ones for ever:** or, *the life of thine afflicted ones.* There is a play upon the different senses of the word *chayyath:* in the first line it means *wild beast* (living creature), in the second *family* (or *life*). For the meaning *family* see note on lxviii. 10.

20. *the covenant*] With the patriarchs, Gen. ix. 9 ff.; xvii. 2 ff.; with the nation at the Exodus, Ex. xxiv. 8; with David, Ps. lxxxix. 3, 39.

For the dark places of the earth are full *of* the habitations
of cruelty.
21 O let not the oppressed return ashamed:
Let the poor and needy praise thy name.
22 Arise, O God, plead thine own cause:
Remember how the foolish *man* reproacheth thee daily.
23 Forget not the voice of thine enemies:
The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth
continually.

the dark places of the earth] The heathen lands where Israel was in exile. We might also render, **the dark places of the land**, i.e. the caves and hiding-places where the persecuted Israelites took refuge, and where they were tracked out and butchered (1 Macc. i. 53, ii. 27 ff.).

are full of *the habitations of cruelty*] R.V. **violence**. If the text is right, the sense seems to be 'places where violence makes its home.' But the expression is a strange one, and the emendation *are full of insolence and violence*, adopted by many commentators, which requires a very slight change in the consonants of the text, is plausible. Cp. lxxiii. 6; Gen. vi. 11, 13.

21. *O let not the oppressed* &c.] Let not the crushed or down-trodden (ix. 9; x. 18) turn back from Thee unanswered and disappointed.

let the poor &c.] Let **the afflicted** have cause to praise Thee for answered prayer.

22, 23. A final appeal. Elsewhere the Psalmist prays 'plead my cause' (xliii. 1), but Israel's cause is God's cause: His honour is at stake.

the foolish man] **The fool**, the members of 'the foolish people,' *v.* 18. The Targ. paraphrases, "the reproach of thy people from the foolish king," but there is nothing to shew that this meant Antiochus rather than Nebuchadnezzar. *daily*] **All the day** (R.V.).

23. *thine enemies*] **Thine adversaries**, as in *v.* 4.

increaseth] Rather, **ascendeth** (R.V.), to heaven, challenging Thee to act. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 29.

PSALM LXXV.

In one of his prophecies of the approaching judgement which was to shatter the power of Assyria and set Israel free, Isaiah compares the rejoicings with which the deliverance would be celebrated to the rejoicings of the Passover festival. "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy feast is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goeth with a pipe to come into the mountain of the LORD, to the Rock of Israel" (Is. xxx. 29). Of such songs this and the following Psalm may well—like Pss. xlvi—xlviii in the Korahite collection—be examples.

They are closely connected in thought and language[1], and may naturally be referred, if not to the same author, at least to the same period. They speak of a great act of judgement, by which God had condemned the proud pretensions of some boastful enemy; of a supernatural annihilation of the hostile forces which had threatened Zion, the city of His choice, whereby He had manifested His Presence and power among His people. The destruction of Sennacherib's army was just such an act of judgement, such a direct intervention on behalf of Zion. Sennacherib, like Pharaoh, had challenged Jehovah to a trial of strength; and through the Assyrian prophecies of Isaiah there runs the thought that it was a crisis comparable to the Exodus, and second only to the Exodus in importance. These Psalms are full of coincidences—indirect rather than direct—with Isaiah's prophecies of that period, and they breathe an intensity of feeling which indicates that the poet himself had experienced that crisis of uttermost peril and marvellous deliverance. The addition in the LXX title of Ps. lxxv, 'A song *with reference to the Assyrians*,' whether due to tradition or conjecture, shews that the Psalm was at an early date connected with the deliverance from Sennacherib.

Some commentators have supposed that these Psalms celebrate Maccabaean victories, such as those of Judas over Apollonius (1 Macc. iii. 10 ff.) and Seron (1 Macc. iii. 13 ff.). But the general improbability of the presence of Maccabaean Psalms in the Elohistic collection has already been pointed out, and there is nothing in the Psalms themselves to support this view. They speak of a signal Divine judgement supernaturally inflicted, rather than of victories won like those of Judas, not indeed without special help from God, but still by the valour of his soldiers.

The position of these Psalms is significant. Following as they do upon the urgent appeal of Ps. lxxiv, they supply an answer to it. "Remember," the compiler of the collection seems to say, "how in one supreme crisis God proved His power to help His people."

Psalm lxxv is cast into a vividly dramatic form, and speaks in a tone of prophetic authority.

i. The people address God with thanksgiving for the recent manifestation of His power on their behalf (1). God speaks in answer, assuring them that ever and anon at the fitting moment He exercises judgement: though all may seem confusion and men's hearts fail them, He maintains the order which He has established in the world (2, 3).

ii. Fortified by this Divine utterance, the Psalmist addresses the proud enemies of Israel, warning them against presumptuous boasting, for Israel looks to no human ally for help, but to God the judge, the sovereign arbiter of human destiny, Who holds in His hands the cup of judicial wrath to administer to those who resist His will (4—8).

iii. While the wicked are thus punished, Israel (on whose behalf the Psalmist speaks) will offer unceasing praise to God; confident that the

[1] Comp. lxxv. 1 with lxxvi. 1, the name of God; lxxv. 9 with lxxvi. 6, the God of Jacob: lxxv. 2, 7 with lxxvi. 8, 9; and the general tone of triumph and thanksgiving which pervades both.

power of the wicked will be utterly destroyed, and the righteous be brought to honour (9, 10).

Compare the Song of Hannah, 1 Sam. ii. 1—10. On the title, **For the Chief Musician**; set to **Al-tashchēth. A Psalm of Asaph, a Song**; see *Introd.* pp. xxiii, xxiv, and Introd. to Ps. lvii.

To the chief Musician, Al-taschith, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

75 Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, *unto thee* do we give thanks:
For *that* thy name *is* near thy wondrous works declare.

2 When I shall receive the congregation
I will judge uprightly.

3 The earth and all the inhabitants thereof *are* dissolved:

1. The theme of the Psalm: thanksgiving for the recent manifestation of God's presence and power among His people.

for that *thy name* is *near thy wondrous works declare*] The A.V., retained in R.V. marg., gives a good sense, but such a personification of God's wondrous works is without analogy, and elsewhere 'wondrous works' is always the object to 'declare' or similar verbs. Hence it is better to render with R.V.:

We give thanks unto thee, O God;
We give thanks, for thy name is near:
Men tell of thy wondrous works.

God's 'Name' is the compendious expression for His Being as it is revealed to men. Cp. the striking parallel in Isaiah's prediction of the coming judgement on the Assyrians (xxx. 27 ff.), a passage which should be carefully studied in connexion with this Psalm, "Behold the name of Jehovah cometh from far." Though God is always 'near' (Deut. iv. 7), yet in an especial sense He is 'near' when He manifests His presence (xxxiv. 18; cxlv. 18). *men tell* &c.] God's miracles of deliverance (ix. 1; lxxi. 17, note) are in every one's mouth.

2, 3. God speaks, as in xlvi. 10, and His words are virtually an answer to men's thoughts. Men may have thought that He had abdicated His function as Judge of all the earth: not so: He was only waiting for the fitting moment for action.

2. When I reach the appointed time,
I judge uprightly.

The 'appointed time' (cii. 13; Hab. ii. 3; Acts xvii. 31) is the proper moment foreordained in the Divine counsels and known to God. The intervention of Jehovah at the moment when the Assyrians are ripe for judgement is a favourite thought with Isaiah (x. 32, 33; xviii. 4, 5).

The second *I* is emphatic: *I*, whatever men may do; *I*, whatever men may think.

3. The first line virtually forms the protasis of the sentence: **Though**

I bear up the pillars of it. Selah.
I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly:
And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn:
Lift not up your horn on high:
Speak *not* with a stiff neck.
For promotion *cometh* neither from the east,
Nor from the west, nor from the south.

the earth &c.; **I have set up the pillars of it.** Though all the world is in terror and confusion, *I* (emphatic) have established a moral order in it. The material world is often compared to a building with its foundations and pillars (1 Sam. ii. 8; Job ix. 6; xxxviii. 4 ff.); and the moral world is described by the same figure. Cp. xi. 3; lxxxii. 5.

I bear up] Lit. *I have proportioned*, or, *adjusted by line and measure.* The rendering of R.V. marg., *When the earth...I set up*, will mean that when confusion reigns, God re-establishes order: but it is better to understand the perfect tense (*I have set up*) of the fundamental laws which God has from the first ordained.

4, 5. A warning to all presumptuous braggarts, based on the Divine utterances of *vv.* 2, 3. It is disputed whether the speaker is still God, as in *vv.* 2, 3, or the poet, but the latter alternative is preferable. The interposition of *Selah* marks the end of the Divine speech, and *I said* naturally introduces a fresh speaker. Moreover there is no break between *v.* 5 and *v.* 6, but it is clear that God is no longer speaking in *vv.* 6, 7.

4. I say unto the arrogant, Deal not arrogantly. Cp. lxxiii. 3; v. 5. Rabshakeh and his colleagues and the Assyrians in general were the very type of such boastful, defiant arrogance (Is. xxxvii. 23; x. 7 ff.; Nah. i. 11).

Lift not up the horn] A metaphor, derived from animals tossing their heads, to denote overweening, defiant self-consciousness of strength.

5. *speak* not with *a stiff neck*] Better, as R.V. marg., *Speak not insolently with a* haughty *neck.* Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 3; and for *neck* = *haughty neck*, see Job xv. 26. *Not* should not have been italicised in A.V. A single negative governs both clauses in the Heb. though our idiom requires its repetition. There is an interesting various reading in the LXX, "Speak not unrighteousness *against God.*" They read in their text the word for *Rock*, which differs by only one consonant from the word for *neck* (צואר — צור); and it is noteworthy that this title of God occurs in Is. xxx. 29. Cp. Hab. i. 12.

6—8. The reason for this warning. Israel looks to God alone for help, and He is the supreme arbiter of human destinies.

6. According to one reading of the Heb. text we must render,
For neither from the east, nor from the west,
Nor yet from the wilderness, (cometh) lifting up.

The wilderness, to the S. of Palestine, stands for the south: and the

7 But God *is* the judge:
He putteth down one, and setteth up another.
8 For in the hand of the LORD *there is* a cup, and the wine is red;
It is full *of* mixture; and he poureth out of the same:
But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring *them* out, *and* drink *them*.
9 But I will declare for ever;
I will sing *praises* to the God of Jacob.
10 All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off;
But the horns of the righteous shall be exalted.

sense is, Exalt not yourselves, for exaltation comes from no quarter of the compass, but from God. But it is better to follow a slightly different reading, which is that of all the Ancient Versions except the Targum, and render the second line, **Nor yet from the wilderness of mountains, (cometh our help)**. The sentence is an aposiopesis, to be completed with words such as those of cxxi. 1, 2. Israel looks not to any quarter of the compass for human help, but to God alone. The North is not mentioned because the Assyrians were approaching from that quarter.

7. *the judge*] Cp. Is. xxxiii. 22.

setteth up] **Lifteth up.** Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7; Ps. cxlvii. 6.

8. The judgement is described under the figure of a cup of wine, which God gives the wicked to drink. The figure is a common one. See Jer. xxv. 15 ff., 27 ff.; xlix. 12; li. 7; Is. li. 17 ff.; Job xxi. 20; Ps. xi. 6; lx. 3. *is red*] Or, **foameth** (R.V.). *mixture*] Herbs and spices to make it more seductive and intoxicating.

but the dregs &c.] **Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall drain up and drink.** They must drink the draught of God's wrath to the last drop. Cp. Is. li. 17. Rosenmüller quotes in illustration from an Arabic poet, "We gave the Hudheilites the cup of death to drink, whose dregs are confusion, disgrace, and shame."

9, 10. The vow of praise and the assurance of triumph.

9. But as for me, I will declare for ever. It is easy to supply 'thy wondrous works.' But the LXX reads (with change of one letter) *I will rejoice*, which may be right. Cp. ix. 14; Is. xxix. 19.

For ever may mean 'while life lasts' (1 Sam. i. 22): or is he speaking as the representative of the immortal people?

10. *will I cut off*] If the poet is the speaker, he speaks in the name of Israel, confident that in God's strength they will be able to complete the humiliation of their proud foes. Cp. Mic. iv. 13. But the speaker may be God, answering the vow of praise with a fresh promise. Cp. xlvi. 10. For the figure cp. Zech. i. 18 ff.

shall be exalted] **Shall be lifted up** (R.V.). Cp. 1 Sam. ii. 10. 'The righteous one' is Israel, righteous by contrast with the wicked Assyrians. Cp. Hab. i. 13.

PSALM LXXVI.

The occasion of this Psalm has already been discussed in the Introduction to Ps. lxxv. Its structure is clearly marked, and should be compared with that of Ps. xlvi. It consists of four stanzas of three verses each, the close of the first and third being marked by *Selah*.

i. God has once more revealed Himself in Zion, by shattering the power of the foes which assailed her (1—3).

ii. Triumphantly He returns from the scene of their discomfiture, where hero and warrior, chariot and horse, lie still in death (4—6).

iii. None can resist Him when He puts forth His power as Judge and Saviour (7—9).

iv. Man's opposition does but enhance His glory. Let Israel render due thanksgiving, and the neighbouring nations pay fitting homage, to Him Who subdues kings and princes at His will (10—12).

On the title, **For the chief Musician, on stringed instruments. A Psalm of Asaph, a Song**, see *Introd.* pp. xix, xxii.

To the chief Musician on Neginoth, A Psalm *or* Song of Asaph.

In Judah *is* God known: 76
His name *is* great in Israel.
In Salem also is his tabernacle, 2
And his dwelling place in Zion.
There brake he the arrows of the bow, 3
The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Selah.

1—3. God has once more shewn His might in Zion by shattering the power of her assailants.

1. *known*] Lit., *one who has made Himself known.* By this recent deliverance He has once more "made Himself known in her palaces as a sure refuge" (xlviii. 3; cp. ix. 16; Is. xxxiii. 13).

his name is *great*] Cp. lxxv. 1; xlvii. 2; xlviii, 1, 10; lxxvii. 13.

Israel] The covenant name, denoting the people of God's choice. Now that the kingdom of Israel had fallen, Judah was the representative of the whole nation.

2. And he hath set his pavilion in Salem,
And his habitation in Zion.

For the words *pavilion* and *habitation* applied to the Temple see xxvii. 5; lxviii. 5. The words may however mean the *covert* and *lair* of a lion (x. 9; civ. 22; Am. iii. 4); and it is possible that the Psalmist intends to describe God as the lion of Judah, who has issued forth from His lair, and seized His prey. Cp. *v.* 4, and the simile in Is. xxxi. 4.

Salem is either an old name for Jerusalem (Gen. xiv. 18), or a poetical abbreviation. The name means 'unharmed,' 'at peace,' and it is doubtless used with allusion to the recent escape of Zion from destruction (Is. xxxiii. 20).

3. There hath he broken the lightnings of the bow. The destruc-

4 Thou *art* more glorious *and* excellent than the mountains of prey.
5 The stouthearted are spoiled, they have slept their sleep:
And none of the men of might have found their hands.
6 At thy rebuke, O God of Jacob,
Both the chariot and horse *are* cast into a dead sleep.

tion of Sennacherib's army apparently took place at some distance from Jerusalem, but Jerusalem is naturally spoken of as the scene of God's action, because it was the seat of His presence (xlvi. 5 ff.) and it was on her behalf that He put forth His power.

For *broken* cp. xlvi. 9; Hos. ii. 18; Is. ix. 4; Jer. xlix. 35; and more generally, Is. xiv. 25. Arrows are called *lightnings* from the swiftness of their flight, rather than from any reference to fire-laden darts (vii. 13, note). *The battle* includes all instruments and equipments for war.

4—6. The manifestation of God's majesty in the discomfiture of the enemy.

4. A difficult verse. Two renderings are grammatically possible: either, **Illustrious art Thou, majestic, from the mountains of prey:** or, **more than the mountains of prey.** The second rendering however appears to involve an unsuitable comparison, whether *mountains of prey* is explained to mean the strongholds of the invaders, or as a metaphor for the invaders themselves, and the first rendering is certainly preferable. It describes God either as issuing forth from mount Zion to spoil the foe (lxviii. 35); or better, as a lion returning from the mountains where he has hunted his prey. Cp. Is. xiv. 25, "I will break the Assyrian in my land, and *upon my mountains* tread him under foot." The fierce lion of Assyria who "filled his caves with prey, and his dens with ravin" (Nah. ii. 11 ff.; iii. 1) had met his match.

The LXX has, *from the eternal mountains* (cp. Hab. iii. 6), a reading which is preferred by some commentators, and understood to mean the mountains of Zion, on which God has placed His throne.

The word rendered *majestic* (A.V. *excellent*) is applied to God in Is. x. 34: "Lebanon," the emblem of the Assyrians, "shall fall by *a majestic one*": Is. xxxiii. 21, "There Jehovah will be with us *in majesty*": cp. the cognate word in Ex. xv. 11, "*majestic in holiness.*"

5. *The stouthearted*] For illustration cp. Is. x. 12 ff.

are spoiled] Lit. *have let themselves be spoiled.* Cp. Is. xvii. 14; xxxiii. 1. *they have slept their sleep*] **They slumber their (last) sleep,** the sleep of death (Jer. li. 39, 57; Nah. iii. 18).

have found their hands] Their hands refused to act; their strength was paralysed; in spite of all their haughty boastings, Is. x. 10, 13, 14, 32.

6. *At thy rebuke*] Cp. ix. 5; xviii. 15; Is. xvii. 13.

are *cast into a dead sleep*] A word which denotes a deep, supernaturally caused slumber. It is usual to say that 'chariot and horse' stand by metonymy for charioteers and horsemen: but surely poetry imagines chariots as well as horses to be alive. The "pransing horses" and

Thou, *even* thou, *art* to be feared:
And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?
Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven; 8
The earth feared, and was still,
When God arose to judgment, 9
To save all the meek of the earth. Selah.

Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: 10
The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.
Vow, and pay unto the LORD your God: 11

the "bounding chariots" (Nah. ii. 3, 4; iii. 2), all the rush and roar of the battle, are still and silent as the grave. Cp. Is. xliii. 17.

7—9. It was the irresistible judgement of God.

7. *to be feared*] The same word as in *v.* 12, and in xlvii. 2.

who may stand] Cp. Nah. i. 6; Ps. i. 5; cxxx. 3.

8. *Thou didst cause judgement to be heard*] Or, as R.V., **sentence.** God pronounced sentence upon the proud Assyrian when He intervened for the rescue of His people. Cp. xlvi. 6; Is. xxx. 30; 1 Sam. ii. 10.

from heaven] For though God has chosen Zion for His earthly dwelling-place, His true abode and seat of judgement is in heaven.

the meek of the earth] Cp. Is. xi. 4; Zeph. ii. 3. Israel, regarded ideally as 'the righteous one' (lxxv. 10), and contrasted with 'the wicked of the earth' (lxxv. 8), is meant.

10—12. The lessons of judgement.

10. *the wrath of man shall praise thee*] All rebellion against God's will must in the end redound to God's glory: it serves to set His sovereignty in a clearer light (Ex. ix. 16). Excellently the P.B.V., 'shall turn to thy praise.'

the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain] All that will not submit shall be subdued. The sense is good, but it is very doubtful if the verb can bear this meaning. Hence R.V., **The residue of wrath shalt thou gird upon thee.** But whose wrath is meant? Surely it cannot be God's wrath, with which He girds Himself to complete the destruction of the foe, for the reference of *wrath* in the two clauses of the verse to different persons is awkward, and it is difficult to see what can be meant by the *residue* of God's wrath. Rather it must be, as in the preceding line, man's wrath that is meant. God girds on Himself as an ornament the last futile efforts of human wrath, turning them to His own honour: or girds them on as a sword, making the wrath of His enemies to minister to their final discomfiture. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 11, "Your spirit (i.e. wrath) is a fire which shall devour you." The peculiar rendering of the LXX, "shall keep festival unto thee," may however point to a different reading, meaning, *shall honour thee.*

11. Let Israel pay the vows it made in its hour of peril (lxvi. 13); let the nations that dwell near God's city and people bring their presents

Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him
that ought to be feared.
12 He shall cut off the spirit of princes:
He is terrible to the kings of the earth.

—a phrase used only of bringing solemn tribute to God (lxviii. 29; Is. xviii. 7). "Many," we read in 2 Chron. xxxii. 23, "brought gifts unto Jehovah to Jerusalem," after the great deliverance.

unto him that ought to be feared] Lit. *unto the fear*, the same word as in Is. viii. 13.

12. *He shall cut off*] Cp. the simile in Is. xviii. 4, 5, describing how Jehovah will destroy the plans of the Assyrians just as they are coming to maturity: and Rev. xiv. 18, 19.

the spirit of princes] Their pride and fury. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 11.

the kings of the earth] Cp. xlviii. 4.

PSALM LXXVII.

This Psalm breathes the spirit of Habakkuk, and uses language closely resembling that of his 'Prayer.' As Habakkuk watched the advance of the Chaldeans, and foresaw that they were to be the executioners of God's judgement upon Judah, his faith was tried to the uttermost. Could such an apparent triumph of pride and violence be consistent with the Divine government of the world? His questionings were answered with the assurance that pride and injustice must inevitably come to ruin, while righteousness endures; but the assurance was coupled with the warning that its realisation might be long delayed. And when the prophet prayed that God would hasten His work lest the delay should prove too great a strain for the faith of His waiting people, in place of a direct answer there rose before his mind the vision of God's Advent to judge His enemies and redeem His people. That Advent he describes in language borrowed from the great deliverances and visitations of the past, conveying the same fundamental idea as that of this Psalm, that Israel's past is the pledge for Israel's future[1].

When the Psalmist wrote, the blow had fallen. Israel was in exile. It is clearly no merely private and personal sorrow which overwhelms his spirit, but the apparent rejection of Israel by God. But in the light of Israel's past history he is taught to believe that this rejection cannot be permanent. In the recollection of that marvellous past he finds the ground of hope for the future. The God who led His people out of the bondage of Egypt can bring them back from their Exile in Babylon.

The structure of the Psalm is regular. There are two main divisions, in each of which there are two stanzas, marked off by *Selah*. The second

[1] For fuller explanation of Habakkuk's magnificent ode I may refer to my *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 276 ff.

and third stanzas fall into equal subdivisions of three verses. In the fourth stanza the rhythm changes; instead of six distichs we have four tristichs; but the number of lines is the same. The last verse stands by itself as the conclusion.

i. The problem.

1. Introduction. The Psalmist relates how in the day of distress he strove, but in vain, to find comfort in prayer (1—3).

2. In the watches of the night he pondered on the past history of Israel (4—6), and asked himself whether God could have irrevocably rejected His people (7—9).

ii. The solution.

3. The answer to such questionings must, he feels, be looked for in God's revelation of Himself in history (10—12), especially in His redemption of Israel out of Egypt (13—15).

4. On the grandeur of that manifestation he dwells at length (16—19).

In conclusion he points to God's guidance of His people through the wilderness (20).

Some commentators regard *vv.* 16—19 as a fragment of another Psalm, mainly on the ground of the change of rhythm, and a supposed want of connexion with what precedes and follows. But though the rhythm changes, tristichs taking the place of distichs, the length of the stanza is the same—twelve lines—as that of the two preceding ones. The first stanza contains a tristich (*v.* 2), and it should be noted that *vv.* 1 and 16 are both marked by the figure of 'epanaphora' or rhetorical repetition.

Attention has also been called to the abruptness of the close of the Psalm, and it has been suggested that it is either incomplete or mutilated. But this abruptness is a mark of the poet's skill. He ends with the thought which he would leave impressed on the reader's mind for his consolation—God's providential guidance of His people. Any addition would weaken the effect. The reader is left to draw the inference that God's guidance will continue, and that, as He redeemed Israel from the bondage of Egypt, He can redeem them from exile in Babylon. The parallel between the Exodus from Babylon and the Exodus from Egypt is constantly present to the minds of the prophets.

The resemblance of the Psalm to the Prayer of Habakkuk has already been referred to. It has been much disputed whether the Psalmist is imitating the Prophet, or the Prophet the Psalm. On literary grounds alone it would be difficult to decide, though the presumption is perhaps in favour of the originality of Habakkuk. But if (as I believe) the Prayer of Habakkuk is an integral part of his book, not a later addition, and if the Psalm belongs to the time of the Exile, the Psalmist must be the borrower.

Compare, besides Hab. iii, Ex. xv; and Pss. cxlii. 1—3; cxliii. 4—6.

To the chief Musician, to Jeduthun, A Psalm of Asaph.

77 I cried unto God *with* my voice,
Even unto God *with* my voice; and he gave ear unto me.
2 In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord:
My sore ran in the night, and ceased not:
My soul refused to be comforted.
3 I remembered God, and was troubled:
I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah.

On the title, **For the chief Musician; after the manner of Jeduthun** (R.V.), see Introd. to Ps. lxii.

1—3. The Psalmist relates how, under the pressure of calamity, he could find no consolation even in prayer.

1. **"Aloud unto God let me cry,**
Yea, aloud unto God, and he will give ear to me."
2. **(Thus) in the day of my distress I sought the Lord:**
My hand was stretched out in the night, and slacked not;
My soul refused to be comforted.
3. **When I would fain remember God, I was disquieted:**
When I would fain muse in prayer, my spirit fainted.

The precise force of the tenses of the original is difficult to determine. The perfects in *v.* 2, and again in *vv.* 4, 5, however, shew that the poet is relating a past experience. In *v.* 1 he quotes, as it were, the words in which, in that hour of sorrow, he resolved to betake himself to prayer, and in *v.* 3, in tenses which recall the emotion of the time, though their force can hardly be given in a translation, he describes his failure to find comfort.

In its rendering *my sore ran*, the A.V. follows Jewish authorities in taking *hand* in the sense of *blow* or *wound* (Job xxiii. 2). 'My wound was unstanched,' is a metaphor for 'my sorrow was unrelieved.' But the rendering of R.V. given above is preferable. He sought God day and night, with hands unceasingly outstretched in the attitude of prayer (xxviii. 2, note; Ex. xvii. 11, 12). The text however is doubtful. The verb which means literally 'was poured out,' is not a natural one to apply to the hand; and the use of the same verb, and substantives derived from the root of the verb rendered 'slacked,' in Lam. ii. 18, 19; iii. 49, with reference to tears, suggests that the original reading may have been, 'Mine *eye* poured down in the night, and slacked not.' So the Targ.

my soul &c.] Like Jacob, mourning for the loss of Joseph (Gen. xxxvii. 35); and Rachel, weeping for her children (Jer. xxxi. 15).

3. For the word rendered 'disquieted' cp. xlii. 5, 11; xliii. 5. In lv. 17 it is joined with that rendered 'muse in prayer,' which recurs in *vv. 6 b*, 12 *b*, and denotes meditation, musing prayer, musing or plaintive speech.

my spirit &c.] Cp. cxlii. 3; cxliii. 4, in contexts full of parallels to this Psalm.

Thou holdest mine eyes waking: 4
I am *so* troubled that I cannot speak.
I have considered the days of old, 5
The years of ancient times.
I call to remembrance my song in the night: 6
I commune with mine own heart:
And my spirit made diligent search.
Will the Lord cast off for ever? 7
And will he be favourable no more?

4—9. In the vigils of the night he pondered on the history of the past, and asked himself with earnest questionings whether it were possible that God could have utterly cast off His people, and changed His character as a gracious and merciful God.

4. **Thou holdest open the lids of mine eyes:**
I was perplexed, and could not speak.
5. **I considered the days of old,**
The years of ages past, (saying),
6. **"Let me remember my song in the night:**
Let me muse in my heart;"
And my spirit inquired, (saying),
7. **"For age after age will the Lord cast off?**
And will he not once again shew favour?"

4. The word rendered *waking* in A.V., *watching* in R.V., probably means the *guards* or *lids* of the eyes. The general sense is clear. In his agony of sorrow he was sleepless and speechless: it was God who withheld sleep from his eyes. He was 'troubled,' perplexed and agitated (Gen. xli. 8; Dan. ii. 3) by the riddle of Israel's present rejection and humiliation, and in this perplexity he pondered (*v.* 5) on the glorious record of God's mercies to His people in the days of old.

5. "Not pathetic only but profound also and of the most solid substance was that reply made by an old Carthusian monk to the trifler who asked him how he had managed to get through his life:—*Cogitavi dies antiquos, et annos aeternos in mente habui.*"

6. In the first two lines he tells us how he bade himself recall the songs of thanksgiving which he had once been able to sing in the night, the quiet time of meditation and thanksgiving (xlii. 8; xcii. 2; Job xxxv. 10), in contrast to his present cries of anguish or silence of despair.

Song means literally 'song to the accompaniment of stringed instruments.' P.B.V. 'and search out my spirits,' follows the reading of the LXX and some other Ancient Versions.

7. The emphasis is on *for ever;* lit. *for ages* to come, which are compared with the ages past (*v.* 5); a different word from that in *v.* 8, and lxxiv. 1. Cp. lxxxv. 5.

For 'shew favour,' cp. xliv. 3; li. 18; lxxxv. 1; cvi. 4.

8 Is his mercy clean gone for ever?
Doth *his* promise fail for evermore?
9 Hath God forgotten to be gracious?
Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? Selah.

10 And I said, This *is* my infirmity:
But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High.
11 I will remember the works of the LORD:
Surely I will remember thy wonders of old.

8. Is his lovingkindness at an end for ever?
Hath his promise failed for all generations?

Cp. lxxxv. 5; cv. 8.

9. Has He forgotten or deliberately abandoned those attributes which He once proclaimed as the essence of His Nature (Ex. xxxiv. 6)? Cp. Hab. iii. 2, "In wrath wilt thou remember mercy."

10—20. The history of the past is the most convincing answer to these questions, the best cordial for his fainting spirits. Cp. Is. lxiii. 7 ff.

10—15. The Psalmist resolves to recall the exhibition of God's character in the deliverance of His people from Egypt.

10. *And I said* introduces the argument by which the Psalmist thrusts aside the possibility of an affirmative answer to his questionings. But the rest of the verse is obscure, and has been very variously explained. The precise sense of the word rendered *my infirmity* is doubtful; and in the second line the word *sh'nōth* may mean *years*, or, *changing*. If the rendering *years* is adopted, the verb *I will remember* must be supplied from *v.* 11. Two explanations deserve consideration.

(i) *This* apparent desertion of Israel by God *is my suffering*, and I must bear it (cp. Jer. x. 19); but for my consolation I will recall *the years of the right hand of the Most High*, "the years of ages past" (*v.* 5), in which the sovereign power of the Ruler of the world was put forth on behalf of His people.

(ii) *It is my weakness* which prompts these questionings. *To think that the right hand of the Most High doth change!* that His power can ever grow feeble (Is. l. 2) or His will change (Mal. iii. 6)!

The explanation, 'This is what grieveth me, that the right hand of the Most High doth change,' is untenable, for *v.* 10 clearly introduces the answer to his doubts.

The authority of the Ancient Versions is in favour of taking *sh'nōth* in the sense of *change*[1], but on the other hand the first explanation retains the sense in which the word has already occurred in *v.* 5.

11. I will make mention of the deeds of Jah;
Yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.

[1] The Targ. however gives alternative renderings.

I will meditate also of all thy work,
And talk of thy doings.
Thy way, O God, *is* in the sanctuary:
Who *is so* great a God as *our* God?
Thou *art* the God that doest wonders:
Thou hast declared thy strength among the people.
Thou hast with *thine* arm redeemed thy people,
The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Selah.

The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid:
The depths also were troubled.

The A.V. *remember* follows the *Qrī*; the R.V. *make mention* is the reading of the *Kthībh*. Cp. Is. lxiii. 7.

The name *Jah* recalls the deliverance from Egypt (Ex. xv. 2; cp. Ps. lxviii. 4), the greatest of all God's wonderful works.

12. **I will meditate also upon all thy work,**
And muse on thy doings. (R.V.)

For *work* cp. Hab. iii. 2.

13. *in the sanctuary*] Better, **in holiness.** Cp. Ex. xv. 11. All the plan and method of God's dealings in the world moves in the sphere of holiness, separate from all sin and imperfection, in accord with the perfection of His Nature. Cp. Habakkuk's appeal to God's holiness (i. 12.)

who &c.] **Who is a great god** (*El*) **like God** (*Elohim*)? For *Elohim* no doubt originally stood *Jehovah* as in the passage of Moses' song, which the Psalmist has in mind (Ex. xv. 11).

14. *Thou* art *the God* &c.] The true **El**, the living, Almighty God (v. 4; xlii. 2). The epithet *that doest wonders* is borrowed from Ex. xv. 11. Cp. Is. xxv. 1.

thou hast declared &c.] Render, **Thou didst make known thy strength among the peoples.** Cp. Ex. xv. 13, 14; ix. 16.

15. *Thou hast* &c.] **With a (strong) arm didst thou redeem thy people.** Cp. Ex. xv. 13, 16; vi. 6; Ps. lxxiv. 2.

the sons of Jacob and Joseph] According to the Targum, Joseph is named because, by preserving the lives of his brethren in Egypt, he became as it were a second father of the nation. But more probably Joseph is named as the father of Ephraim and Manasseh, the ancestors of the most powerful tribes of the Northern Kingdom. Cp. lxxviii. 67; lxxx. 1; lxxxi. 5. In Amos (v. 6, 15; vi. 6) *Joseph* denotes the Northern Kingdom. In Obad. 18, *the house of Jacob and the house of Joseph* stands for the whole nation. Cp. Zech. x. 6; Ezek. xxxvii. 16, 19; xlvii. 13; xlviii. 32.

16—19. The manifestation of God's sovereignty over nature in that supreme act of redemption.

16. The waters and depths of the Red Sea are personified, as though they were conscious of the presence of their Creator and Lord. Cp.

17 The clouds poured out water:
The skies sent out a sound:
Thine arrows also went abroad.
18 The voice of thy thunder *was* in the heaven:
The lightnings lightened the world:
The earth trembled and shook.
19 Thy way *is* in the sea,
And thy path in the great waters,
And thy footsteps are not known.
20 Thou leddest thy people like a flock
By the hand of Moses and Aaron.

Hab. iii. 10, "The mountains saw thee, they were afraid": and Ps. cxiv. 3; Ex. xv. 5, 8. We miss in translation the pictorial force of the Heb. tenses: lit. **they are afraid, the depths also tremble.**

17. God came in storm and earthquake. So the poet develops the thought of Ex. xiv. 24, 25. Cp. Ps. xviii. 7 ff.; xcvii. 3 ff.; and the parallel passage in Hab. iii. 10, 11, where *tempest* (R.V.) is the cognate substantive to the verb rendered *poured out* here.

sent out a sound] Better (cp. Hab.), **uttered a voice**, i.e. thundered. God's arrows are the flashes of lightning.

18. *in the heaven*] The word *galgal*, derived from a root meaning *to roll*, was understood by the Jewish commentators to mean the *vault* or *circuit* of the heaven. More probably it should be rendered **in the whirlwind** (R.V.), or, **with rumbling**, the rolling of the thunder being conceived of as the rolling of God's chariot-wheels. Cp. Hab. iii. 8.

19. **Thy way was in the sea,**
And thy paths in the great waters,
And thy footsteps were not known. (R.V.)

Cp. Hab. iii. 15. The A.V. *path* follows the *Qrī*; R.V. *paths* the *Kthībh* and the Ancient Versions. The sea flowed back where Israel passed, and no visible trace of God's victorious march was left:—a parable of His method of working. Cp. Job xxiii. 8 ff.

20. Conclusion. The convulsions of nature were the heralds of deliverance (Luke xxi. 28), and the Shepherd of Israel led forth His flock under the guidance of His chosen servants. Cp. Ex. xv. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 52 ff.; lxxiv. 1, note. The words of the last line come from Num. xxxiii. 1; cp. Mic. vi. 4; Is. lxiii. 11 ff.

PSALM LXXVIII.

In Ps. lxxvii the poet recalls God's wonderful works of old for the encouragement of his faith in the hour of distress. In this Psalm he invites his hearers to draw a lesson of warning for themselves from the past history of the nation. Again and again Israel had forgotten the great works which Jehovah had done for them, and with base ingratitude

and short-memoried faithlessness had rebelled against His government, or tempted Him by distrust of His goodness. The Psalmist holds up the picture to his contemporaries, in the hope that they may be taught to avoid repeating the sins of their forefathers.

Though the Psalm refers to the behaviour of the whole nation, Ephraim (if the text of *v.* 9 is sound) seems to be singled out at the outset as especially guilty; and the Psalm concludes with the choice of Zion as the seat of the sanctuary and David as the king of Israel, in a way which indicates that the writer had some reason for dwelling upon the position of Jerusalem and the Davidic kingdom as the special objects of Jehovah's favour. But the rebuke of Ephraim is not the main purpose of the Psalm. Its intention is evidently positive, to draw warnings for the present and the future from the consideration of the past.

It is impossible to fix the date of the Psalm with any certainty. That the history is brought down to the time of David and no further does not prove that it was written then. It presumes the existence of the Temple (*v.* 69), and apparently the separation of the kingdoms. It has been said that "the didactic use of past history is in itself decisive against a pre-Exile date," and that "it would be foolish to separate it from Pss. cv—cvii." But the didactic use of past history is to be found in the earliest prophets; and though Pss. cv, cvi belong to the same class of historical Psalms, it does not necessarily follow that they all belong to the same period. There are some remarkable differences, and Pss. cv—cvii contain clear allusions to the Captivity, which this Psalm does not. *V.* 69 speaks of the Temple in language which makes it difficult to suppose that it had already been destroyed. Moreover it is at least noteworthy, that the Psalmist refers to those plagues only which are described in the Jehovistic narrative in Exodus (J), and according to a very probable reading and explanation of *v.* 48, to all of them. He does not refer to the plague of darkness described in the Elohistic narrative (E) only, nor to the plagues of lice and boils described only in the Priestly code (P). Of course the poet was not bound to mention every plague, but it is a not unnatural inference that he was familiar with J only, while it was still in circulation as a separate work. If so, the Psalm must have been written at a relatively early date. On the other hand the use of the title "the Holy One of Israel" (*v.* 41) indicates that it is not earlier than the time of Isaiah, who originated this title to express the truth revealed to him in the vision of his Call. It may however belong to that period, and may have been written in view of the hostility of the Northern Kingdom to Judah (Is. vii, viii), or more probably in view of the fall of the Northern Kingdom, as a warning to Judah to beware lest, though Zion was the city of God's choice, and the house of David chosen to rule His people, they too, like Shiloh and Ephraim, might be rejected. At such a time moreover the thought of the divine choice of Jerusalem might naturally be offered as a ground of hope and confidence.

The Psalm falls for the most part into stanzas of eight and sixteen verses. *Vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41; 56, 57, form a kind of initial refrain, in which the dominant idea of the Psalm,—Israel's rebellion and temptation of God—is repeated and emphasised. The Psalmist does not follow the

historical order of events, but relates first the care of Jehovah for Israel and Israel's ingratitude towards Jehovah in the wilderness (12—39), and then the miracles of the Exodus and the settlement in Canaan (40 ff.).

i. The purpose of the Psalm stated;—to draw warning and instruction for the present from the past history of Israel, by recapitulating its course and enforcing its lessons in accordance with the divine command, that the ingratitude and unfaithfulness of the past might not be repeated (1—8).

ii. Israel's history had been a strange record of forgetfulness and disloyalty to the God Who had brought them out of Egypt and provided for their wants in the wilderness with loving care (9—16).

iii. In spite of His care they rebelled against Him and tempted Him by doubting His power and goodness, so that even while He provided for their wants He was forced to punish them for their sin (17—31).

iv. The chastisements of the wilderness produced only temporary and superficial amendment, and it was due to God's forbearance that they were not utterly destroyed (32—39).

v. It was no momentary aberration, but repeated and defiant rebellion, in utter forgetfulness of all that they owed to Jehovah for redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt. The Psalmist relates the wonders which accompanied their deliverance, in order to set Israel's ingratitude in the strongest light. Jehovah destroyed their enemies, and brought them safely into the land which He had prepared for them (40—55).

vi. But there again they tempted God and rebelled against Him, till He forsook His dwelling-place in Shiloh, and abandoned them to their enemies (56—64).

vii. Yet once more He had mercy on them, and when He delivered them from their enemies, He chose Judah instead of Ephraim, Zion in place of Shiloh, and appointed David to be the shepherd of His people (65—72).

Comp. generally, besides Pss. cv, cvi, Deut. xxxii.

Maschil of Asaph.

78 Give ear, O my people, to my law:
Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.

On the title, *Maschil of Asaph*, see *Introd.* p. xviii.

1—8. The Psalmist's solemn invitation to his countrymen to listen to his teaching. He proposes to set forth the lessons to be drawn from Israel's past history, in obedience to God's command to hand on the tradition of His mighty works for the encouragement and warning of each successive generation.

1, 2. Cp. the opening of Ps. xlix, noting that while there 'all peoples' are addressed, in accordance with the wider scope of the teaching of the 'Wise Men,' here Israel is addressed in the spirit of prophecy. It was the function of prophecy to interpret the past, as

I will open my mouth in a parable: 2
I will utter dark sayings of old:
Which we have heard and known, 3
And our fathers have told us.
We will not hide *them* from their children, 4
Shewing to the generation to come
The praises of the LORD, and his strength,

well as to foretell the future. *my law*] Rather, **my teaching**, as in Prov. i. 8, and often. See note on i. 2.

2. On the words *parable* and *dark sayings* or *enigmas* see note on xlix. 4. The Psalmist has no mere narrative of facts to recount, but a history full of significance for those who can penetrate its hidden meaning. It is a 'parable' not for Israel only, but for every individual in the Christian Church. *dark sayings of old*] Lessons drawn from the history of ancient times, from the Exodus, when Israel was 'born' as a nation, onward. Cp. lxxvii. 5.

This verse is freely quoted by St Matthew (xiii. 34, 35), in a form which does not agree exactly either with the Heb. or with the LXX, with reference to our Lord's teaching in parables. "All these things spake Jesus in parables unto the multitudes; and without a parable spake he nothing unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet, saying,

I will open my mouth in parables;
I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

The words of the Psalmist are not a direct prophecy of the Messiah's method of teaching; but just as Christ as perfect Man summed up in Himself and fulfilled the manifold experiences of the people of God, so as the perfect Teacher He adopted the methods of the teachers of the old dispensation, and 'fulfilled' them by carrying them to their highest perfection. As the Psalmist used the facts of Israel's history to convey the lesson which he desired to teach, so Christ used the phenomena of Nature and the experiences of Life. Comp. *Introd.* pp. lxi ff.

3, 4. It is best to place a full stop at the end of *v.* 2, and connect *vv.* 3, 4 thus:

The things which we have heard and known,
And our fathers have told to us,
We will not hide from their sons,
Telling to another generation the praises of Jehovah,
And his strength and his wondrous works that he hath done.

With line 2 cp. xliv. 1; Judg. vi. 13.

'From *our* sons' might have been expected rather than 'from *their* sons': but the pronoun *their* is significant. It implies that the trust was committed to the speakers by their ancestors not for themselves only but for future generations. Excellently Keble:

"The tale our fathers used to tell
We to their children owe."

And his wonderful works that he hath done.

5 For he established a testimony in Jacob,
And appointed a law in Israel,
Which he commanded our fathers,
That *they* should make them known to their children:
6 That the generation to come might know *them*, *even* the children *which* should be born;
Who should arise and declare *them* to their children:
7 That they might set their hope in God,
And not forget the works of God,
But keep his commandments:
8 And might not be as their fathers,
A stubborn and rebellious generation;
A generation *that* set not their heart aright,
And whose spirit was not stedfast with God.

The praises of Jehovah are His praiseworthy acts. Cp. xxii. 3, 30, 31. For *wondrous works* see note on lxxi. 17. Cp. cxlv. 4 ff.

5. *a testimony...a law*] Not the Mosaic legislation generally, but the express precept which enjoined upon Israelite parents the duty of teaching their children the great facts of Israel's history, that the remembrance of them might be handed down from generation to generation. See Ex. x. 2; xii. 26, 27; xiii. 8 ff., 14; Deut. iv. 9; vi. 20 ff. Cp. in the N.T. 2 Tim. ii. 2.

that they *should make them known*] *Them* refers to "the things which we have heard and known" &c., *vv.* 3, 4. Cp. Deut. iv. 9.

6. The A.V. follows the Massoretic division of the verse; but it is better to connect the clauses thus:

That another generation might know,
That sons which should be born might arise and tell their sons.

7. *their hope*] Or, **their confidence**, as Prov. iii. 26.

and not forget] "Lest thou forget" is the constantly recurring warning in Deuteronomy (iv. 9, &c.).

the works of God] Or, as R.V. in lxxvii. 11, **the deeds of God.**

8. *as their fathers*] Primarily, the generation of the wandering in the wilderness; but the warning was true for almost every age.

stubborn and rebellious] Epithets applied in Deut. xxi. 18 to the son, whom no admonition or chastisement would reform, and for whom accordingly nothing remained but the penalty of death. Cp. Jer. v. 23; Deut. ix. 7 ff.; xxxi. 27; xxxii. 5, 20.

that *set not their heart aright*] Failed to direct and prepare it with stedfast purpose to serve God. Cp. *v.* 37.

whose spirit was not stedfast] Better, as in *v.* 37, **was not faithful.** Fickleness, instability, untrustworthiness, were the characteristics of Israel's conduct.

The children of Ephraim, *being* armed, *and* carrying bows, 9
Turned *back* in the day of battle.
They kept not the covenant of God, 10
And refused to walk in his law;
And forgat his works, 11
And his wonders that he had shewed them.
Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers, 12
In the land of Egypt, *in* the field of Zoan.

9—16. Israel's disobedience and ingratitude, in spite of all God's mercies to them at the Exodus and in the wilderness.

9. This verse presents serious difficulties. (1) It seems to speak of some well-known act of cowardice on the part of the Ephraimites. But why should cowardice in war be censured, when it is disloyalty to God of which the Psalmist is speaking? It has been suggested that it refers to the slackness of Ephraim in prosecuting the conquest of Canaan (Judg. i), regarded as shewing their distrustfulness of God, in view of all the mighty works that He had done for them in the past. But it seems better to understand it figuratively (cp. *v.* 57), to mean that the Ephraimites were like cowards who flee in battle, and failed to fight for the cause of God. (2) Why are the Ephraimites particularly named, when the context refers to all Israel? Possibly to point forward to the rejection of Ephraim and choice of Judah which is the climax of the Psalm (*v.* 67). *vv.* 10, 11 must then be taken with *v.* 9, as a literal description of the disobedience and unfaithfulness of the Ephraimites.

After all attempts to explain it, the verse remains obscure, and many commentators suppose that it is an interpolation or that the text is in some way corrupt. The absence of parallelism and rhythm casts some suspicion on it independently; and it may possibly have been a gloss suggested by *v.* 57, and inserted here as an illustration of Israel's want of stedfastness (*v.* 8). *v.* 10 would follow naturally on *v.* 8, introducing the description of the rebellious generation, whose conduct is held up to reprobation for the admonition of their descendants.

10. *the covenant of God*] See Ex. xix. 5; xxiv. 3, 7, 8.

11. **And they forgat his doings,**
And his wondrous works that he had shewed them (R.V.).

12. **In the sight of their fathers he did wonders.** Cp. lxxvii. 14.

in *the field of Zoan*] Zoan, known to the Greeks as Tanis, was situated on the E. bank of the Tanitic branch of the Nile. It was famous as the capital of the Hyksos dynasty, and was refounded by Ramses II, the Pharaoh of the oppression. It is described by Mr Petrie, who excavated it in 1883—4, as "a city which was only inferior to the other capitals—Thebes and Memphis—in the splendour of its sculptures." The phrase "field of Zoan" for the district in which it was situated has been found in an Egyptian inscription.

After this brief allusion to the plagues, of which he intends to speak in detail afterwards (43 ff.), the Psalmist passes on at once to the Exodus and the journey through the wilderness.

13 He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through;
And he made the waters to stand as a heap.
14 In the daytime also he led them with a cloud,
And all the night with a light of fire.
15 He clave the rocks in the wilderness,
And gave *them* drink as *out of* the great depths.
16 He brought streams also out of the rock,
And caused waters to run down like rivers.

17 And they sinned yet more against him
By provoking the most High in the wilderness.
18 And they tempted God in their heart

13. *He divided the sea*] Lit. **clave**, as in *v.* 15; the word which is used in Ex. xiv. 16; Is. lxiii. 12; Neh. ix. 11.

as an heap] Cp. Ex. xv. 8; Ps. xxxiii. 7.

14. And he led them with the cloud by day (cp. Ex. xiii. 21), as a shepherd leads his flock (*v.* 53; lxxvii. 20).

15, 16. He clave rocks in the wilderness,
And gave them drink as out of the depths abundantly:
And he brought forth streams out of a cliff.

Two different words are used, with reference to the two occasions upon which the Israelites were miraculously supplied with water: first in Rephidim at the beginning of their journey when Moses was commanded to smite 'the rock' (Ex. xvii. 6), and secondly, in Kadesh, at the close of their wanderings, when Moses smote 'the cliff, to which he was commanded to speak (Num. xx. 8 ff.). *The depths* are the reservoirs of water hidden in the earth (xxxiii. 7; Gen. vii. 11; Deut. viii. 7).

17—31. In spite of these miracles of mercy they sinned yet more, and tempted God in their unbelief, so that while He supplied their wants He was compelled to punish them for their sin. The order is logical not chronological. The first murmurings for food (Ex. xvi) preceded the giving of the water: and the narratives of Ex. xvi and Num. xi are fused into one.

17. Yet went they on still to sin against him,
Rebelling against the Most High in the land of drought.

Both the occasions referred to in *vv.* 15, 16 were connected with murmuring. The names of *Massah* and *Meribah* preserved the memory of Israel's sin in tempting God and striving with Him. And to these sins they added other sins. Note how the words 'rebel' and 'tempt' recur like a refrain at the beginning of each division of the Psalm (*vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41; 56). Cp. xcv. 9; cvi. 7, 14, 33, 43; Ex. xvii. 2, 7; Num. xiv. 22; xx. 10, 24; Deut. i. 26, 43; vi. 16; ix. 23; xxxiii. 8; &c. The two words sum up Israel's behaviour: they rebelled against God by constant disobedience to His revealed Will; they tempted Him, by sceptical doubts of His goodness, and insolent demands that He should prove His power.

By asking meat for their lust.
Yea, they spake against God; they said,
Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?
Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out,
And the streams overflowed;
Can he give bread also?
Can he provide flesh for his people?
Therefore the LORD heard *this*, and was wroth:
So a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also came up against Israel;
Because they believed not in God,
And trusted not in his salvation:
Though he had commanded the clouds from above,
And opened the doors of heaven,
And had rained down manna upon them to eat,
And had given them *of* the corn of heaven.

18. *by asking* &c.] **By asking food for their appetite**: a different word from that rendered *lust* in *v.* 30. The allusion is not to the demand for flesh, but to the doubt whether God could provide food for the people at all (Ex. xvi. 2 ff.). In the verses which follow, the murmurings which preceded the first sending of manna and quails (Ex. xvi) are fused with those which preceded the second sending of quails (Num. xi).

19. *Can God furnish*] R.V., **Can God prepare?**

20. *can he provide*] R.V., **Will he provide?** The narrative is thrown into a graphic poetical form. Unbelief reaches its climax in the words *for his people*. If, as He says, we are His people, let Him provide, and provide liberally, for our wants. *Bread...flesh*, as in Ex. xvi. 8, 12.

21. **Therefore when Jehovah heard, he was wroth:**
And a fire was kindled against Jacob,
And anger also went up against Israel.

Cp. *vv.* 59, 62. *A fire* alludes to the punishment of the murmuring Israelites by the burning at Taberah (Num. xi. 1 ff.), before the second giving of quails.

Went up is a metaphor from smoke. Cp. xviii. 8; lxxiv. 1.

22. For a moment they had believed (Ex. xiv. 31), but they soon fell away. Cp. Num. xiv. 11, a verse which might serve as a motto for this Psalm. *his salvation*] Of which they had had such marvellous proof in the Exodus (Ex. xiv. 13; xv. 2).

23. **Yet he commanded the skies above,**
And opened the doors of heaven;

24. **And he rained down manna upon them to eat,**
And gave them the corn of heaven.

25. **Everyone did eat the bread of the mighty,**
He sent them provision to the full.

25 Man did eat angels' food:
He sent them meat to the full.
26 He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven:
And by his power he brought in the south wind.
27 He rained flesh also upon them as dust,
And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea:
28 And he let *it* fall in the midst of their camp,
Round about their habitations.

The A.V. rendering of the verbs in *vv.* 23, 24 as pluperfects is contrary to the rules of Hebrew grammar. The connexion of thought is that God was wroth at the unbelief of the Israelites, and yet He provided for their wants. The Psalmist does not follow the order of time in his recital, but combines the different murmurings, and then the different provisions of manna and quails.

The doors of heaven, as of some vast storehouse: cp. 'the windows (or 'flood-gates') of heaven,' 2 Kings vii. 2, 19; Mal. iii. 10. The Psalmist closely follows the language of Exodus xvi. 4, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you." Cp. cv. 40; John vi. 31.

Corn of heaven may allude to the granular form of the manna (Ex. xvi. 31).

Angels' food (LXX, Vulg., Syr.) is probably a right paraphrase of the words *the bread of the mighty*, though the term is nowhere applied to the angels. But cp. ciii. 20. Wisd. xvi. 20, "Thou feddest thine own people with angels' food," naturally follows the LXX. It is a question whether we should render '*Everyone* did eat' &c. cp. Ex. xvi. 16, 18, 21; or *man*, as contrasted with angels: cp. the Targ. "The sons of men ate bread which came down from the dwelling of the angels": but the former is probably right. For *to the full* cp. Ex. xvi. 3, 8, 12.

26. He led forth the east wind in the heaven:
And by his power he guided the south wind:
27. And he rained flesh upon them as the dust,
And winged fowl as the sand of the seas.

The sending of quails is connected, as in Ex. xvi, with the sending of the manna; but the language of the Psalm follows the description of the second sending of quails in Num. xi.

The verbs in *v.* 26 are the same as those in *v.* 52. Cp. Ex. x. 13; Num. xi. 31. *East* and *South* are separated for the sake of rhythm. A S.E. wind brought up the quails from 'the sea,' i.e. the Red Sea. "The period when they were brought to the camp of Israel was in spring, when on their northward migration from Africa. According to their well-known instinct, they would follow up the coast of the Red Sea until they came to its bifurcation by the Sinaitic Peninsula, and then would cross at the narrow part." Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 231.

28. *their camp...their habitations*] Cp. Ex. xvi. 13; Num. xi. 31.

So they did eat, and were well filled:
For he gave them their own desire;
They were not estranged from their lust.
But while their meat *was* yet in their mouths,
The wrath of God came upon them,
And slew the fattest of them,
And smote down the chosen *men* of Israel.
For all this they sinned still,
And believed not for his wondrous works.
Therefore their days did he consume in vanity,
And their years in trouble.
When he slew them, then they sought him:
And they returned and inquired early after God.
And they remembered that God *was* their rock,
And the high God their redeemer.

29. *for he gave them* &c.] **For he brought them that for which they lusted.** Cp. cvi. 14; Num. xi. 4, 34.

30. **They were not estranged from their lust,**
Their food was yet in their mouth,

31. **When the anger of God went up against them,**
And slew of the lustiest of them,
And laid low the young men of Israel.

Even before they had been surfeited with the quails—an allusion to Num. xi. 20—the judgement fell upon them (Num. xi. 33), and the plague broke out. God punishes men by answering their prayers, a truth which even heathen moralists recognised.

32—39. These judgements failed to reform them, and further chastisements produced only temporary and superficial amendments. Yet in spite of all, God continued to shew them mercy.

32. The further sin of murmuring and unbelief on the return of the spies, for which they were condemned to wander in the wilderness. See Num. xiv, esp. *v.* 22 ff.

for his wondrous works] I.e., because of. Better, as R.V., **in.**

33. *in vanity...in trouble*] Or, **as a breath**, unsubstantial and transitory (xxxix. 5, 11; lxii. 9): **with sudden terror** (Lev. xxvi. 16).

34. **When he slew them, then they would inquire after him:**
And return and seek God earnestly.

The tenses denote the repeated alternations of punishment and repentance. Cp. Jud. ii. 11 ff.

35. *their rock*] Cp. Deut. xxxii. 4 ff.

the high God] **God Most High**, *El Elyōn*, a combination found elsewhere only in Gen. xiv. 18 ff. But cp. lxxiii. 11; and vii. 17, xlvii. 2, *Jehovah Elyōn;* lvii. 2, *Elōhīm Elyōn.*

36 Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,
And they lied unto him with their tongues.
37 For their heart was not right with him,
Neither were they stedfast in his covenant.
38 But he, *being* full of compassion, forgave *their* iniquity, and
destroyed *them* not:
Yea, many a time turned he his anger away,
And did not stir up all his wrath.
39 For he remembered that they *were but* flesh;
A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again.
40 How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness,

36. But they flattered him with their mouth,
And lied unto him with their tongue (R. V.).

As though God were a man who could be deceived by hypocrisy. Cp. Is. xxix. 13.

According to the Massoretic reckoning, this is the middle of the 2527 verses of the Psalter, but it must be remembered that the titles of the Psalms are frequently reckoned as verses in the Hebrew text (*Introd.* p. xvi).

37. *right...stedfast*] Or, **stedfast...faithful.** Cp. *v.* 8, where the same words are used. *The heart* is the organ of thought and will, which determines the moral and religious character, the seat of true repentance and amendment of life (li. 10; lvii. 7).

38. This verse describes the general attributes of God, in virtue of which (*v.* 39) He spared Israel in spite of their guilt. Render:

But he, being full of compassion, forgiveth iniquity and destroyeth not,
And ofttimes turneth his anger away,
And stirreth not up all his wrath.

Cp. Ex. xxxiv. 6, 7; xxxii. 10, 12; Num. xiv. 18ff.; Deut. iv. 31.

"*V.* 38 is, according to *Kiddushin* 30*a*, the middle of the 5896 lines (στίχοι) of the Psalter. According to *Maccoth* 22*b*, Ps. lxxviii. 38 and Deut. xxviii. 58, 59, xxix. 8 were recited, when the forty stripes save one, which Paul five times suffered (2 Cor. xi. 24), were inflicted on the offender." (Delitzsch).

39. *For* &c.] **And he remembered** &c. *Flesh* denotes the frailty of human nature, including moral as well as physical weakness: *a wind* &c. symbolises the transitoriness of human life. Cp. lvi. 4; ciii. 14ff.; Gen. vi. 3; Job vii. 7ff.

40—55. But as God multiplied His mercies, Israel multiplied its acts of rebellion: and in order to set the heinousness of their ingratitude in a still stronger light, the Psalmist goes back to recount the miracles which preceded and prepared for the Exodus.

40, 41. An emphatic repetition of *vv.* 17, 18.

provoke him] Rather, as in *vv.* 8, 17, 56, **rebel against him.** Both words, *rebel against* and *grieve*, occur together in Is. lxiii. 10.

And grieve him in the desert!
Yea, they turned *back* and tempted God, 41
And limited the Holy One of Israel.
They remembered not his hand: 42
Nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy.
How he had wrought his signs in Egypt, 43
And his wonders in the field of Zoan:
And had turned their rivers into blood; 44
And their floods, *that* they could not drink.

41. And they turned again and tempted God,
And provoked the Holy One of Israel.

limited (A.V.) would mean "entertained mean and circumscribed notions of His power and goodness and faithfulness" (Kay), or 'hindered His action by their unbelief' (Matt. xiii. 58). But more probably the word means *provoked* (LXX, Syr., Jer.).

the Holy One of Israel] A title characteristic of the Book of Isaiah, and found in the Psalter only here and in lxxi. 22, lxxxix. 18. It denotes that it was in His character of a Holy God that Jehovah had become the God of Israel. Though the title is not used in the Pentateuch, the thought is expressed there. In the chastisements of His people Jehovah proved Himself to be a Holy God, Who could not tolerate sin; and it was because Moses and Aaron failed to acknowledge that holiness, that they were punished by exclusion from Canaan (Num. xx. 12, 13).

42. *his hand*] His power exerted on their behalf. See Ex. iii. 19, and often. nor *the day* &c.] **Nor the day when he redeemed them from the adversary** (R.V.).

43. How he set his signs in Egypt (R.V.): words borrowed from Ex. x. 1, 2, "my signs which I have set among them." Cp. cv. 27.

Only six, or, if *v.* 48 or *v.* 50 refers to the murrain, possibly seven, plagues are mentioned, the plagues of lice, boils, and darkness being omitted. The order is different from that of Exodus, coinciding with it only in the first and last plagues. It is of course possible that the Psalmist, treating the narrative with poetic freedom, only mentions the principal plagues, and intentionally omits the others: but it is noteworthy that the three which he does not mention are just those the accounts of which are judged by critics upon grounds of style to have been derived from different documents: the plague of darkness from the 'Elohistic document,' and the plagues of lice and boils from the 'Priestly Code.' The accounts of the remaining seven are in the main derived from the 'Jehovistic document.' See Driver's *Introd. to the Lit. of the O. T.*, pp. 22 ff. It certainly looks as if the Psalmist used the 'Jehovistic document,' while it was in circulation as a separate work.

44. And turned their rivers into blood,
And their streams, that they could not drink.

See Ex. vii. 17 ff. The word for 'rivers' (*y'ōr*) is one specially used of the Nile and its canals.

45 He sent divers sorts *of flies* among them, which devoured them;
And frogs, which destroyed them.
46 He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar,
And their labour unto the locust.
47 He destroyed their vines with hail,
And their sycomore trees with frost.
48 He gave up their cattle also to the hail,
And their flocks to hot thunderbolts.
49 He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger,
Wrath, and indignation, and trouble,

45. The fourth and second plagues, Ex. viii. 20 ff., viii. 1 ff. The word rendered *divers sorts of flies*, or, **swarms of flies** (R.V.), is used only with reference to this plague (Ex. viii; Ps. cv. 31), and probably means some venomous kind of fly, such as abound in Egypt.

46. The eighth plague, Ex. x. 1 ff.

their increase] The produce of the land (lxvii. 6). The word rendered 'caterpillar' is not used in Exodus, but often occurs elsewhere, and probably denotes the locust in the larva or pupa state.

47. He killed their vines &c. The seventh plague, Ex. ix. 13 ff. Cp. cv. 33. Grapes and figs are among the fruits frequently represented in paintings in Egyptian tombs. The sycomore was and is one of the common trees of Egypt, much valued for its durable wood, of which mummy cases were commonly made.

with frost] This is the rendering of the LXX, Aq., Syr., Jer., but *great hailstones* (R.V. marg.) or *lumps of ice* is more probably the meaning.

48. And he gave over their beasts to the hail,
And their cattle to fiery lightnings.

As the text stands, the reference is to the destruction of the Egyptian cattle as well as the crops by the lightning which accompanied the hail-storm (Ex. ix. 28). But two Hebrew MSS., with which agrees the version of Symmachus, read DEBER, 'pestilence' in place of BĀRĀD, 'hail.' Now DEBER is the word used in Ex. ix. 3 ff. of the *murrain* which attacked the cattle. RESHEPH, the word rendered *fiery lightnings*, is also used of *burning fever* in Deut. xxxii. 24; Hab. iii. 5; in the latter passage in parallelism with DEBER. It seems possible, therefore, that this verse originally referred to the fifth plague, the murrain on the cattle. The LXX, Syr., Jer., Targ. however support the Massoretic Text.

49—51. The culmination of the plagues in the death of the first-born.

49. *He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger*] Lit., *he sent*, as in *v.* 45. The same phrase is found in Job xx. 23.

By sending evil angels *among them.*
He made a way to his anger; 50
He spared not their soul from death,
But gave their life over to the pestilence;
And smote all the firstborn in Egypt; 51
The chief of *their* strength in the tabernacles of Ham:
But made his own people to go forth like sheep, 52
And guided them in the wilderness like a flock.
And he led them on safely, so that they feared not: 53
But the sea overwhelmed their enemies.
And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary, 54

by *sending evil angels* among them] R.V., **a band of angels of evil**: lit. *a mission of evil angels:* not wicked angels, but destroying angels, commissioned by God to execute His purposes of punishment. Cp. "the destroyer," Ex. xii. 23; and see 2 Sam. xxiv. 16 f.; 2 Kings xix. 35; Job xxxiii. 22.

50. *He made a way to his anger*] Lit., **he levelled a path for his anger**, i.e. gave it free course.

but gave their life over to the pestilence] This is the natural rendering of the words in this context. The rendering of R.V. marg., *gave their beasts over to the murrain*, is that of the Ancient Versions. But a reference to the murrain is out of place here, where the Psalmist is clearly describing the culmination of the plagues in the destruction of the firstborn. He emphasises the fact that after minor plagues had failed to touch Pharaoh's conscience, God finally attacked the very *lives* of the Egyptians.

51. *the chief of* their *strength*] **The beginning**, or, **firstlings of strength**, a term applied to firstborn sons in Gen. xlix. 3; Deut. xxi. 17. So cv. 36.

in the tabernacles of Ham] R.V. **tents.** Ham was the ancestor of Mizraim, i.e. Egypt, Gen. x. 6. Cp. cv. 23, 27; cvi. 22.

52—55. God's guidance of Israel through the wilderness into Canaan. Cp. Ex. xv. 13—17. The circumstances of the Journey have been already recounted in *vv.* 13 ff.

52. *But made* &c.] **But he led forth his people like sheep.** The verb is that which is commonly used of the journeyings of the Israelites from stage to stage through the wilderness (Ex. xv. 22 &c.). The figure of Israel as Jehovah's flock is a favourite one in the Asaphite Psalms (lxxiv. 1 note).

53. *feared not*] In contrast to their enemies, who were seized with panic (Ex. xiv. 25), Israel had no cause for fear (Ex. xiv. 13). Not of course that they never gave way to fear (Ex. xiv. 10).

overwhelmed] The same word as that rendered *covered* in Ex. xv. 10.

54. *The border of his sanctuary* may mean the land of Canaan, as that in which He purposed to place His temple, and *this mountain* may

Even to this mountain, *which* his right hand had purchased.

55 He cast out the heathen also before them,
And divided them an inheritance by line,
And made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

56 Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God,
And kept not his testimonies:

57 But turned *back*, and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers:
They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.

58 For they provoked him to anger with their high places,
And moved him to jealousy with their graven images.

59 When God heard *this*, he was wroth,
And greatly abhorred Israel:

denote Mount Zion. But it is preferable to render **to his holy border**, the land separate from all other lands, to be consecrated by His Presence, and known henceforth as the Holy Land: and in the next line, **to the mountain land, which** &c. This is the sense in Ex. xv. 17, which evidently was in the poet's mind. Cp. Deut. iii. 25; Is. xi. 9.

55. And he drove out the nations before them,
And allotted them for the portion of their inheritance:
i.e. distributed the land of the Canaanites among the Israelites by lot. Cp. Josh. xxiii. 4; Ps. cv. 11.

56—58. The unfaithfulness of Israel in Canaan during the period of the Judges.

56. *Yet* &c.] **Yet they tempted and rebelled against God the Most High.** In spite of all God's goodness to them, they persisted in their old unfaithfulness. Cp. *vv.* 17, 18; 40, 41. *God the Most High* is not *El Elyōn*, as in *v.* 35; but *Elōhīm Elyōn*, the equivalent of *Jehovah the Most High*, vii. 17; xlvii. 2.

his testimonies] His commandments, regarded as bearing witness to His will. Cp. xix. 7; xxv. 10.

57. *unfaithfully*] Or, as R.V., **treacherously**. Cp. Hos. v. 7; vi. 7. *like a deceitful bow*] Which misses the mark and disappoints its owner. Cp. Hos. vii. 16.

58. They provoked Jehovah, the "jealous God" Who can tolerate no rival (Ex. xx. 5), by their adoption of Canaanite idolatries. Cp. Deut. xxxii. 16, 21.

59—64. Once more therefore God punished them for their sins, abandoning them to their enemies and even suffering the Ark to be captured.

59. Cp. *v.* 21. *and greatly abhorred Israel*] Better, **and utterly rejected Israel.** Israel here can hardly mean Ephraim only, as some commentators hold; for neither sin nor punishment was limited to

So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, 60
The tent *which* he placed among men;
And delivered his strength into captivity, 61
And his glory into the enemy's hand.
He gave his people over also unto the sword; 62
And was wroth with his inheritance.
The fire consumed their young men; 63
And their maidens were not given to marriage.
Their priests fell by the sword; 64
And their widows made no lamentation.
Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, 65
And like a mighty *man* that shouteth by reason of wine.

Ephraim, and the sanctuary of Shiloh, though in Ephraimite territory, was the sanctuary of all Israel.

60. *placed*] Lit. *caused to dwell.* The use of this word here and in Josh. xviii. 1 (A.V. *set up*) was probably suggested by its frequent use with reference to the dwelling of God among His people. Cp. Jer. vii. 12.

On the position and history of Shiloh see note on 1 Sam. i. 3.

61. *his strength...his glory*] The Ark, the symbol and seat of His majesty (1 Sam. iv. 21 f.; Ps. cxxxii. 8), was suffered to fall into the hands of the Philistines (1 Sam. iv. 11 ff.).

the enemy's hand] **The adversary's hand.** (R.V.)

62. See 1 Sam. iv. 2, 10, 17.

63. **Fire devoured their young men;**
And their maidens had no marriage song. (R.V.)

The fire of war (Num. xxi. 28) consumed the young men, so that the maidens remained unmarried.

64. *and their widows* &c.] This line recurs word for word in Job xxvii. 15. In the universal distress the customary rites of mourning were not performed, even for a husband (2 Sam. xi. 26, 27).

65—66. At length Jehovah took pity on His people, and delivered them from their adversaries.

65. While His people were at the mercy of their enemies He seemed to be asleep. Cp. xliv. 23, note.

that shouteth &c.] Cp. Is. xlii. 13, 14. "The daring figure of God's awaking as from sleep, and dashing upon Israel's foes, who are also His, with a shout like that of a hero stimulated by wine, is more accordant with Eastern fervour than with our colder imagination; but it wonderfully expresses the sudden transition from a period, during which God seemed passive and careless of His people's wretchedness, to one in which His power flashed forth triumphant for their defence." (Maclaren). Many modern commentators follow the LXX, Targ., and Jer., in rendering *like a giant who has been overcome with wine.* This gives a good parallelism to the preceding line, but the verb does not occur elsewhere in this sense, and bold as are the similes of the Psalmists, this would be scarcely seemly.

66 And he smote his enemies in the hinder parts:
He put them to a perpetual reproach.
67 Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph,
And chose not the tribe of Ephraim:
68 But chose the tribe of Judah,
The mount Zion which he loved.
69 And he built his sanctuary like high *palaces*,
Like the earth which he hath established for ever.
70 He chose David also his servant,
And took him from the sheepfolds:
71 From following the *ewes* great with young he brought him
To feed Jacob his people,
And Israel his inheritance.

66. *And he smote* &c.] Render with R.V., **And he smote his adversaries backward**, a general allusion to the victories over the Philistines and other enemies of Israel under Samuel, Saul, and David. The A.V. follows Jewish authorities in seeing a reference to 1 Sam. v. 6 ff.

67—69. The choice of Zion.

67. *Moreover* &c.] **And he rejected the tent of Joseph**, i.e. Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim. The Ark was never brought back there, and if Shiloh was not actually destroyed by the Philistines, it ceased to be the sanctuary of the nation. Jeremiah points to the fall of Shiloh as a warning to his incredulous contemporaries, who refused to believe that Jehovah could possibly desert Jerusalem and allow His Temple to be destroyed (Jer. vii. 12, 14; xxvi. 6, 9). Stanley observes that the first division of the history of the Chosen People ended with the overthrow of the first sanctuary, as the second division terminated in the fall of the second sanctuary, and the third by the still vaster destruction of the last Temple of Jerusalem. *The Jewish Church*, Lect. xvii.

68. *which he loved*] Cp. lxxxvii. 2; xlvii. 4.

69. *like high* palaces] Rather, **like the heights** of heaven, which along with the earth are emblems of grandeur and stability.

70—72. The choice of David as king.

70. *David his servant*] Though any Israelite might profess himself Jehovah's servant in addressing Him, only a few who were raised up to do special service or who stood in a special relation to Jehovah, such as Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Job, are distinguished by this title of honour. Cp. 2 Sam. iii. 18; vii. 5, 8; 1 Kings viii. 24; Ps. lxxxix. 3, 20; cxxxii. 10.

71. From following the ewes with their young ones he brought him,
To be shepherd of Jacob his people &c.

This natural metaphor for the ruler's care of his people was especially appropriate in the case of David, who was taken from being the shep-

So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; 72
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

herd of Jesse's flock to be the shepherd of Jehovah's flock. Cp. 2 Sam. v. 2.

72. *the integrity of his heart*] Cp. 1 Kings ix. 4; Ps. vii. 8; ci. 2; and the use of the cognate adjective in xv. 2; xviii. 23.

the skilfulness] The regal faculty of *discernment* which Solomon desired (1 Kings iii. 9), and with which he was so richly endowed (1 Kings iv. 29).

PSALM LXXIX.

The occasion of this Psalm has already been discussed in the Introduction to Ps. lxxiv. It consists of three stanzas.

i. The Psalmist tells God of the invasion of His land, the desecration of His Temple, the destruction of His city, the slaughter of His servants, the reproach of His people (1—4).

ii. He entreats God to show mercy to Israel, and not to punish them any more for the sins of their forefathers, but to chastise their wanton oppressors (5—8).

iii. Once more he pleads for help and pardon, urging that the honour of God's name is at stake, and that the outrages of the heathen should not go unpunished; and he concludes with a vow of perpetual praise from the restored nation (9—13).

This Psalm, together with Ps. cxxxvii, is prescribed in the Talmudic treatise *Sopherim* (xviii. 3) for use on the 9th day of the month Ab, the day on which the destruction of both the first and the second Temple was commemorated. Cp. Zech. vii. 3.

A Psalm of Asaph.

O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance; 79
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.

1—4. The Psalmist tells his grief to God: His land is overrun by heathen, His temple is desecrated, His city is in ruins, His people are slaughtered, the survivors are the scorn of their neighbours.

1. Cp. Jer. li. 51; Lam. i. 10; and for the desecration of the Temple cp. lxxiv. 7; Ezek. vii. 21, 22.

the heathen] Lit. as in *vv.* 6, 10, **the nations**: but where, as here, the nations are in antagonism to God and His people, the rendering *heathen* may be retained. *thine inheritance*] Here of the holy land (cp. Ex. xv. 17): more commonly of the people (lxxiv. 2; lxxviii. 62, 71).

on heaps] I.e. in ruins: perhaps an allusion to the prophecy of Micah

2 The dead bodies of thy servants have they given
To be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
3 Their blood have they shed like water
Round about Jerusalem; and *there was* none to bury *them.*
4 We are become a reproach to our neighbours,
A scorn and derision to them that are round about us.
5 How long, LORD? wilt thou be angry, for ever?
Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

(iii. 12; cp. Jer. xxvi. 18). For the archaic use of 'on,' Wright (*Bible Word-Book*, p. 436) quotes Shakespeare, *Henry V*, v. 2. 39;

And all her husbandry doth lie *on heaps.*

2. The horrors of a remorseless slaughter were aggravated by the disgrace of the corpses being left unburied, in accordance with the threats of the law (Deut. xxviii. 26) and prophets (Jer. vii. 33; viii. 2; ix. 22; xv. 3; xvi. 4; xix. 7).

thy servants...thy saints] These titles are not meant to plead Israel's merits, but Israel's relationship to God in virtue of His covenant with them (lxxiv. 20; l. 5).

3. *like water*] Freely, and as though it were of little worth. Contrast cxvi. 15.

none to bury them] Cp. Jer. xiv. 16. This passage is quoted freely in 1 Macc. vii. 17 with reference to the murder of certain Assideans by the high priest Alcimus, "He took of them threescore men and slew them in one day, according to the words which one wrote, The flesh of thy saints and their blood did they shed round about Jerusalem, and they had none to bury them." Clearly the meaning cannot be that the Psalm was written with reference to that event, for by that time (B.C. 162) the situation of affairs was wholly different from that described in the Psalm. Judas had won many victories, and the Temple had been re-dedicated. Moreover the Psalm implies a much more extensive slaughter of Israelites, and that by heathen, not by a treacherous Israelite. There is probably another reminiscence of *v.* 3 in 1 Macc. i. 37, "They shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it."

4. A repetition of xliv. 13, with the change of 'thou makest us' to 'we are become.' Cp. lxxx. 6; Ezek. xxii. 4; xxv. 6 ff. Dan. ix. 16 combines this verse with *v.* 8 *a*.

5—8. Prayer that God will cease to be angry with His own people and will punish their destroyers.

5. How long, Jehovah, wilt thou be angry for ever?
(How long) shall thy jealousy burn like fire?

As in xiii. 1, faith combines two questions into a self-contradictory expression. *How long* and *for ever* are characteristic words of Ps. lxxiv (*vv.* 1, 10, 19). Cp. lxxx. 4; lxxxix. 46.

Shall thy jealousy burn like fire] "Jehovah thy God is a devouring

Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known 6
thee,
And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name.
For they have devoured Jacob, 7
And laid waste his dwelling place.
O remember not against us former iniquities: 8
Let thy tender mercies speedily prevent us:
For we are brought very low.
Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name: 9
And deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's
sake.
Wherefore should the heathen say, Where *is* their God? 10

fire, a jealous God" (Deut. iv. 24). He cannot endure a divided allegiance, and must punish Israel for its sin. Cp. Deut. xxix. 20; Zeph. i. 18.

6. *upon the heathen* &c.] Not upon the nations as such, but upon the nations which refuse to acknowledge Jehovah, and make havoc of His people. Render with R.V., **that know thee not...that call not upon thy name.**

7. *his dwelling place*] R.V. **his habitation,** marg. *pasture*: a different word however from *pasture* in *v.* 13.

vv. 6, 7 recur in Jer. x. 25. At first sight it would appear that the prophecy must be earlier than the Fall of Jerusalem, and that the Psalmist must be quoting from the prophet. But ch. x in its present form can hardly be from the pen of Jeremiah himself: *vv.* 1—10 at any rate can hardly be his: and *vv.* 23—25 appear to be a composite passage. The insertion of 'yea, they have devoured him and consumed him' after 'Jacob,' looks like the transformation of poetry into prose, and it is possible that the Psalm is the original.

8. Remember not against us the iniquities of our forefathers (R.V.). For these sins Israel in the Exile knew that it was suffering (Lam. v. 7), in accordance with the warnings of the law (Ex. xx. 5). For the phrase cp. Jer. xi. 10. But the next verse shews that the Psalmist does not claim that his own generation is innocent. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 39, 40.

prevent us] **Come to meet us.** See on lix. 10. It is an appeal to the fundamental revelation of God as a merciful God (Ex. xxxiv. 6).

9—12. Repeated prayers for deliverance for the honour of God's Name.

9. *for the glory of thy name*] Lit. *for the sake of the glory of thy name* (xxix. 2; lxvi. 2). If Thou art not moved by the sight of our sufferings, at least be jealous for Thine own honour, lest the heathen should think that Israel's God is powerless to help His people.

purge away] Or, *make atonement for.* See note on lxv. 3.

10. *Wherefore* &c.] The same plea in cxv. 2 (cp. also cxv. 1 with *v.* 9); Joel ii. 17. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 12; Ps. xlii. 3; Mic. vii. 10.

Let him be known among the heathen in our sight
By the revenging of the blood of thy servants which is shed.
11 Let the sighing of the prisoner come before thee;
According to the greatness of thy power
Preserve thou those that are appointed to die;
12 And render unto our neighbours sevenfold into their bosom
Their reproach, wherewith they have reproached thee, O Lord.
13 So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture
Will give thee thanks for ever:
We will shew forth thy praise to all generations.

let him be known] Better:

Let vengeance for thy servants' blood that is shed
Be made known among the heathen in our sight.

Defer not vengeance to some future generation: let us see with our own eyes the fitting punishment of the enemies of Israel. This verse and *v.* 9 are based upon Deut. xxxii. 43. Note how the thought of vengeance goes side by side with that of deliverance in Is. xxxv. 4; xlvii. 3; lix. 17; lxi. 2; lxiii. 4; and in Jer. l. 15, 28; li. 6, 11, 36, chapters which also probably date from the Exile.

11. The same phrases recur in cii. 20.

thy power] Lit. *thine arm*, a word which recalls the memories of a glorious past (Ex. xv. 16; Ps. xliv. 3).

those that are appointed to die] Lit., *the sons of death*. It is not necessary to understand these expressions literally of prisoners sentenced to execution: more probably they denote the prison and the living death of exile (Is. xlii. 7; xlix. 9; lxi. 1).

12. *our neighbours*] Cp. *v.* 4: the nations around, such as the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, which instead of sympathising rejoiced at Israel's calamity. Cp. Ezek. xxv.

sevenfold] Cp. Gen. iv. 15; and contrast Christ's law of forgiveness, Matt. xviii. 22.

into their bosom] A metaphor from the practice of carrying articles in the folds of the dress. It further suggests the idea of full and intimate recompence. Cp. Is. lxv. 6; Jer. xxxii. 18; Luke vi. 38.

13. Concluding vow of thanksgiving. Israel will then be able to render its tribute of unceasing praise to its Lord and Shepherd.

sheep of thy pasture] Cp. lxxiv. 1, note; lxxx. 1.

thy praise] Cp. lxxiv. 21; lxxviii. 4. To set forth Jehovah's praise was Israel's mission, Is. xliii. 21.

PSALM LXXX.

The Psalm begins with a prayer to the Shepherd of Israel once more to manifest His power and lead His people to victory (1—3).

How long, pleads the Psalmist, will God continue to be angry with His people and abandon them to the mockery of their enemies (4—7)?

He reminds God of the care which He had once bestowed upon the vine of Israel, and of its former luxuriant growth: why then has He now withdrawn His protection and abandoned it to the ravages of its foes (8—13)?

Once more he prays that God will visit and restore His people, and bind them to Himself by a new bond of allegiance (14—19).

The refrains (3, 7, 19) mark a strophical arrangement, and *vv.* 8—19 naturally fall into two divisions, 8—13, 14—19. But there are indications of some dislocation of the text of *vv.* 14 ff., and it is possible that the strophical arrangement was originally more complete.

This Psalm throws into the form of a prayer those hopes for the restoration of the Northern tribes and the reunion of all Israel, which are found in the prophets from the time of Amos onward, and are expressed in the fullest detail by Jeremiah (iii. 11—15; xxxi. 1—21), and Ezekiel (xxxvii. 15—28), and, probably at a still later date, after the first Return from the Exile, in Zech. ix—xi.[1] It must have been written after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, when political rivalry between Israel and Judah was at an end; and it may have been written either before the Exile or after the Return from Babylon, for the language of *vv.* 3, 7, 19 does not necessarily imply that the whole nation was in exile. But more probably it was written during the Babylonian exile; for (1) *vv.* 3, 7, 19 are most naturally interpreted as a prayer for the termination of the exile: (2) *vv.* 12 ff. seem to describe the land as wholly overrun by enemies and the national existence as for the time at an end: and (3) the resemblances of language to Pss. lxxiv and lxxix are in favour of referring it to the same period[2].

On the whole then, though the Psalm may be a prayer of the post-exile congregation for the fuller restoration of Israel, and doubtless was so used by them, it seems best to regard it as originally the prayer of Israel in exile for a complete national restoration. The special interest shewn in the tribes of the Northern Kingdom (*v.* 2) may have been due to the connexion of the author with one of those tribes: but it is sufficiently accounted for by the prominence given to Israel's restoration in Jeremiah and Ezekiel. "The brotherly love of Judah for Israel (cp. lxxvii. 15; lxxxi. 5) is a reflection (if we may expand the thought of the Asaphite Psalmists in accordance with Jer. xxxi. 9, 20) of the fatherly love of Jehovah for His 'first-born.' Man's self-will (Hos. v. 11) cannot permanently make void the divine idea of all-Israel." (Cheyne.)

According to the Massoretic accentuation the title runs, **For the chief**

[1] For a discussion of the date of Zech. ix—xi the writer would refer to his *Doctrine of the Prophets*, pp. 443 ff.

[2] With *v.* 1 cp. lxxiv. 1: lxxix. 13; with *v.* 4 cp. lxxiv. 1, 9, 10; lxxix. 5; with *v.* 6 cp. lxxix. 4, 12; with *v.* 18 cp. lxxix. 6, 9.

Musician, set to Shoshannim (*lilies*): **a testimony of Asaph, a Psalm:** but the analogy of the title of Ps. lx suggests the connexion of the words *Shoshannim-Eduth*, i.e. (*Like*) *lilies is the testimony*, pure and beautiful. These would be the opening words of some well-known song in praise of the Law, to the melody of which the Psalm was to be sung. Cp. the titles of Pss. xlv, lxix; and see *Introd.* p. xxiv.

To the chief Musician upon Shoshannim-Eduth, A Psalm of Asaph.

80 Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel,
Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock;
Thou that dwellest *between* the cherubims, shine forth.
2 Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh

1—3. A prayer for the restoration of God's favour to His people.

1. The Psalmist addresses God (1) as *the Shepherd of Israel*, a title which is the correlative of the words in lxxix. 13, *thy people and the flock of thy pasture* (cp. lxxiv. 1), and appeals to their claim on His protecting care: (2) as **thou that leddest Joseph like a flock**, recalling His providential guidance of them through the wilderness (lxxvii. 20; lxxviii. 52): (3) as **thou that sittest enthroned upon the Cherubim**, words which suggest the double idea of the King enthroned in heaven and yet dwelling in the midst of His people (1 Sam. iv. 4; 2 Sam. vi. 2; 2 Kings xix. 15), and are here clearly intended to recall the Presence of God with His people in the wilderness manifested from the 'mercy-seat' above the Ark (Ex. xxv. 22). *Israel* is the nation as a whole; *Joseph* represents the tribes of the Northern Kingdom, in which the Psalmist has a special interest. Cp. *Jacob and Joseph*, Ps. lxxvii. 15. The use of the title *Shepherd* may allude to the use of the word in Jacob's blessings of Joseph, Gen. xlviii. 15 (*fed=shepherded*), xlix. 24.

shine forth] Manifest Thyself in power and glory for our deliverance. Cp. l. 2; xciv. 1; Deut. xxxiii. 2.

2. Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh were united by the tie of common descent from Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, who is regarded by Jeremiah (xxxi. 15) as the mother of the Northern Kingdom, and they are named as representatives of that Kingdom. According to Num. ii. 17 ff. these tribes encamped to the West of the Tabernacle, and marched immediately behind it (*v.* 24). *Before Ephraim* &c. therefore means, 'placing Thyself at their head as a victorious leader, as Thou didst go before them of old in the journeyings of the wilderness.' At first sight it may seem strange that Benjamin is reckoned among the Northern tribes, for partially at any rate it sided with Rehoboam (1 Kings xii. 21; 2 Chr. xi. 3, 23; xv. 8, 9); but the one tribe remaining to David was Judah (1 Kings xi. 13, 32, 36), and Benjamin must be reckoned to the Northern Kingdom to make up Ten tribes, for Simeon had become merged in Judah and is not counted. The principal Benjamite towns of Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho belonged to the Northern Kingdom.

Stir up thy strength,
And come and save us.
Turn us again, O God, 3
And cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

O LORD God *of* hosts, 4
How long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?
Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; 5
And givest them tears to drink *in great* measure.

stir up thy strength] Put in action **thy might** (xx. 6) which seems to be dormant. *come and save us*] R.V., **come to save us**: lit. come *for salvation* or *deliverance for us.*

3. *Turn us again*] Usually taken to mean *bring us back* from exile, or more generally, *restore us:* repair our broken fortunes. Cp. lx. 1. But is it not rather an allusion to Ephraim's prayer in Jer. xxxi. 18, interpreted in Lam. v. 21 in a spiritual sense? National repentance is the condition of national restoration; and it must be God's own work. Make us return to Thee, and return to us (*v.* 14) with Thy favour as of old; then and not till then shall we be saved.

cause thy face to shine] Shew us Thy favour as of old: words borrowed from the great Aaronic benediction, Num. vi. 25. Cp. Ps. iv. 6.

4—7. How long shall Israel continue to be the object of Jehovah's displeasure, and the scorn of neighbouring nations?

4. *O LORD God* of *hosts*] *Jehovah Elōhīm Tsebāōth*, as in lix. 5. For the meaning see note on xlvi. 7. There is a special significance in the repeated appeals to Jehovah (4, 14, 19) by the title which denotes His universal sovereignty, and therefore His ability to help Israel in its humiliation, and also recalls the days when He went forth with Israel's armies to victory.

how long wilt thou be angry] Lit. *hast thou been fuming.* For the verb cp. lxxiv. 1. The tense denotes 'how long hast Thou been and wilt Thou continue to be angry,' and implies that Israel's distress has already lasted long. Cp. lxxiv. 9, 10; lxxix. 5.

against the prayer of thy people] As the punishment for the sins of their ancestors (Prov. i. 28 ff.; Lam. iii. 8). Perhaps the smoke of the divine wrath is thought of as a thick cloud which interposes between them and God; see Lam. iii. 44. We might render *in spite of the prayer*, but the rendering of A.V. and R.V. is the more forcible. God's indignation against His people is so intense, that even their prayers are an offence to Him. On the wrath of God as the manifestation of His holiness see Oehler's *O. T. Theology*, § 48.

The LXX and Syr. read *thy servant* or *thy servants* for *thy people.*

5. Thou hast fed them with bread of tears,
And given them tears to drink in large measure.

i.e. made tears their daily portion: cp. xlii. 3; cii. 9. *In large measure,*

6 Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours:
And our enemies laugh among themselves.
7 Turn us again, O God *of* hosts,
And cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

8 Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt:
Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.
9 Thou preparedst *room* before it,
And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.
10 The hills were covered *with* the shadow of it,
And the boughs thereof *were like* the goodly cedars.

lit. *by the tierce*, or third part of some larger measure, probably the *bath* (=*ephah*, in dry measure), and if so containing nearly three gallons: a huge drinking goblet, though but a tiny measure for the dust of the earth, Is. xl. 12, the only other place where the word occurs.

LXX, Syr., Jer., read *us* for *them*.

6. *a strife* &c.] An object of contention (Jer. xv. 10): the petty states round about (lxxix. 4, 12), Edomites, Arabians, and the like, quarrel among themselves for our territory. Lagarde conjectures that we should read MANÔD, *shaking* (of the head), for MADÔN, *strife*, as in xliv. 14, which would suit the parallelism better.

laugh among themselves] Rather, *to their heart's content*, so, *laugh scornfully*. Cp. lxxix. 4.

P. B. V. 'laugh *us* to scorn' follows LXX, Vulg., Jer.

8—13. Under the figure of a vine, once carefully tended and spreading far and wide in luxuriant growth, but now exposed to the ravages of wild beasts, the Psalmist contrasts God's former care for His people with their present plight. The figure of the vine may have been suggested by Gen. xlix. 22. See Hos. x. 1; Is. v. 1—7; xxvii. 2—6; Jer. ii. 21; xii. 10 ff. "The vine was the emblem of the nation on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the colossal cluster of golden grapes which overhung the porch of the second Temple; and the grapes of Judah still mark the tombstones of the Hebrew race in the oldest of their European cemeteries, at Prague." *Sinai and Palestine*, p. 164.

8. Thou broughtest a vine out of Egypt (R.V.): the verb is one which can be applied to the transplantation of a vine, or the migration of a people, as in lxxviii. 52. **Thou didst drive out the nations, and plantedst it.** See Ex. xxiii. 28 ff.; xv. 17; Ps. xliv. 2; lxxviii. 55.

9. *Thou preparedst* room *before it*] As the vinedresser prepares the ground for his vine by clearing away the stones and thorns and all that would hinder its free growth (Is. v. 2), so God prepared Canaan for Israel by the expulsion of its old inhabitants.

and didst cause it &c.] Rather, **and it struck deep its roots, and filled the land.**

10. *The hills*] **The mountains.**

the goodly cedars] **Cedars of God** (*El*), those "which he hath planted,"

She sent out her boughs unto the sea, 11
And her branches unto the river.

Why hast thou *then* broken down her hedges, 12
So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her?
The boar out of the wood doth waste it, 13
And the wild beast of the field doth devour it.
Return, we beseech thee, O God *of* hosts: 14
Look down from heaven, and behold,
And visit this vine;
And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, 15

the indigenous cedars of Lebanon, noblest of forest trees. Cp. "mountains of God" (xxxvi. 6). The alternative rendering of R.V. marg., *And the cedars of God with the boughs thereof*, gives the same sense as the LXX. The vine grew so that it overshadowed the mountainous country to the South, and the cedars of Lebanon on the North, an allusion to the ideal boundaries of the Promised Land, as described in Deut. xi. 24 (where 'the wilderness'='the mountains' here). That the next verse clearly refers to the Eastern and Western boundaries is an argument in favour of this interpretation.

11. She sent out her branches unto the sea,
And her shoots unto the River (R.V.),

spreading westward to the Mediterranean, and eastward to the Euphrates, boundaries approximately realised in the time of David and Solomon. See lxxii. 8; Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; 2 Sam. viii. 6; 1 Kings iv. 24.

12. *Why* &c.] The question is half expostulation, half inquiry, for Israel's present plight is a riddle to the Psalmist.

hedges] R.V. **fences.** Vineyards were always carefully fenced to protect them (Is. v. 5). Almost the same words recur in lxxxix. 40, 41.

13. The boar out of the forest doth ravage it,
And the wild beasts of the field feed on it.

"Under Hermon," says Dr Tristram, "in the vineyard districts, we heard grievous lamentations of the damage done to the vines by the boars, which not only devour the grapes, but also munch up the bearing shoots." *Nat. Hist. of Bible*, p. 56. Israel's land is laid waste by remorseless enemies.

14—19. Repeated prayers for the restoration of God's favour to Israel.

14. *Return*] Or, as R.V., **Turn again.** It is the intransitive form of the verb *turn us again* in *vv.* 3, 7, 19.

15. This verse presents serious ambiguities and difficulties. The first word may be rendered as a substantive, in close connexion with *v.* 14, *and the vineyard*, or better as R.V. **and the stock**: or, as in R.V. marg., as a verb: **and protect** (or **maintain**) **that which thy right**

And the branch *that* thou madest strong for thyself.

16 *It is* burnt with fire, *it is* cut down:
They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance.
17 Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,
Upon the son of man *whom* thou madest strong for thyself.
18 So will not we go *back* from thee:
Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.
19 Turn us again, O LORD God *of* hosts,
Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

hand hath planted. The second rendering is preferable, though not wholly free from difficulty.

the branch] Or, *the son*, which is the literal meaning of the word. Cp. Ex. iv. 22; Hos. xi. 1. Probably an allusion to Gen. xlix. 22. The Targum interprets, "and upon Messiah the king, whom thou hast made strong for thyself." But the primary reference is obviously to the nation.

madest strong] Tending it with loving care till it grew up: cp. lxxxix. 21; Is. i. 2.

16. The gender of the word shews that *it* refers to the vine. *Cut down*, as fit for nothing but fuel. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 12; Ezek. xv. 4.

they perish &c.] The figure is dropped. The Israelites perish, for God has not merely hidden His face, but turned it upon them in anger.

It has been conjectured that there has been some displacement of the text, and various rearrangements have been proposed. Thus Cheyne would read the verses in this order: 11, 14, 15, 12, 13, 16. *Let them perish* will then refer to Israel's enemies. Then too there may have been some confusion between 15 *b* and 17 *b*.

17. A repetition of *v.* 15, dropping the metaphor. Extend Thy hand, put forth Thy power to protect the people which Thy right hand made into a nation and delivered from Egypt. *The son of man* describes it as affected by human frailty and therefore needing divine help. The personification of Israel as Jehovah's son underlies the language of the verse. Possibly there is an allusion to *Benjamin* = 'son of the right hand.'

18. So shall we not go back from thee (R.V.), bound to Thee by a fresh tie of allegiance. *quicken us*] The restoration of our national life (Hos. vi. 2) will evoke a fresh response of grateful praise.

19. *O LORD God* of *hosts*] There is a climax in the use of divine names in the refrains (3, 7, 19). The Psalmist clenches his appeal by the use of the covenant name Jehovah, along with the title expressive of universal sovereignty, God of hosts.

PSALM LXXXI.

The beginning of each month was marked by the blowing of the silver trumpets (Num. x. 10); but the first day of the month Ethānīm or Tisri (Sept.—Oct.), the seventh month of the ecclesiastical year and the first of the civil year, was kept as a solemn festival and was called 'the Day of trumpet-blowing' or 'the Feast of trumpets' (Num. xxix. 1; Lev. xxiii. 24). Upon the fifteenth day of the same month, at the full moon, the Feast of Tabernacles began (Lev. xxiii. 39). To this double celebration *v.* 3 plainly alludes; and we find that from ancient times this Psalm has been the New Year's Day Psalm of the Jewish Church, and that by an apparently unanimous Jewish tradition it is connected with the Feast of Tabernacles. It is unreasonable to disregard the evidence of practice and tradition, and maintain that the Psalm was intended for the Passover, on the ground of the reference to the Exodus in *v.* 5. In point of fact its contents are more appropriate to the Feast of Tabernacles than to the Passover. The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous of all the feasts, and the opening verses are a call to a jubilant celebration. The Feast of Tabernacles was the time appointed for the septennial recitation of the Law (Deut. xxxi. 10); and the leading thoughts of the Psalm are that allegiance of Israel to Jehovah alone which was the fundamental principle of the Law; Jehovah's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, which was the ground upon which that claim rested; and Israel's failure in its duty and consequent loss of promised blessing.

The Psalm falls into three divisions:

i. A call to celebrate the festival with shout and song and blowing of trumpets, for it is a divine ordinance for Israel (1—5).

ii. Throwing himself back in imagination to the time of the Exodus, the Psalmist hears the voice of God proclaiming the decree for Israel's liberation, and the fundamental principle of the covenant made at Sinai, the absolute allegiance of Israel to Jehovah as their God (6—10).

iii. But Israel would not obey, and Jehovah was forced to leave them to experience the consequences of their obstinate self-will. Yet even now, if they would obey His commands, He would subdue their enemies, and satisfy them with the promised blessings of plenty (11—16).

Some commentators regard the Psalm as a combination of two fragments, 1—5 *a*, *b*, 5 *c*—16, on the ground of the want of connexion between 5 *b* and 5 *c*, the dissimilarity in style between the two parts, and the unsuitability of the latter part for a festival hymn. But these arguments are not convincing. If the transition in *v.* 5 is somewhat abrupt, it is not more so than is frequently the case; that the Psalmist should pass from a summons to the celebration of the festival to a consideration of its religious significance is perfectly natural; and a review of Jehovah's relation to Israel is surely not unsuitable for a festival hymn, in view alike of the general commemorative purpose of the festival, and of the particular fact that it was the occasion for the septennial recitation of the Law, which was based upon that relation. That rejoicing should be tempered by warning is fully in accord with the prophetic spirit of the Asaphic Psalms.

There is nothing in the Psalm by which its date can be fixed with certainty. It contains several allusions to Deut. xxxii, and *vv.* 11, 12 may be a reminiscence of Jer. vii. 24. The summons to the festival implies that the Temple was standing, and from *vv.* 14, 15 it may be inferred that the nation was threatened or oppressed by foreign enemies. Perhaps it may belong to the later years of the kingdom, and if so, probably to the reign of Josiah.

It is the special Psalm for Thursday as well as for New Year's Day according to the ancient Jewish usage. See *Introd.* p. xxiv. Presumably the title in the LXX once contained a reference to this usage, as the Old Latin Version has *Quinta Sabbati*; but it has disappeared from all but one or two MSS of the LXX.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, *A Psalm* of Asaph.

81 Sing aloud unto God our strength:
Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob.
2 Take a psalm, and bring hither the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the psaltery.
3 Blow up the trumpet in the new moon,
In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day.

On the title, **For the chief Musician; set to the Gittith** (R.V.), see *Introd.* p. xxiii.

1—3. A call to the joyous celebration of the festival, addressed to the whole congregation (*v.* 1), to the Levites as the appointed leaders of the Temple music (*v.* 2), and to the Priests, whose special duty it was to blow the trumpets (*v.* 3). See Num. x. 8, 10; Josh. vi. 4 ff.; 2 Chr. v. 12 ff., vii. 6; Ezra iii. 10.

1. *God our strength*] Cp. Ex. xv. 2; Ps. xlvi. 1.

2. *Take a psalm* &c.] Or, **Raise a psalm and sound the timbrel.** The timbrel, or tabret, was a tambourine or hand drum; the psaltery, like the harp, a stringed instrument.

3. *the trumpet*] Heb. *shōphār*, the horn, as distinguished from the metal trumpet. In the Pentateuch the use of the *shōphār* is only prescribed in connexion with the year of Jubilee (Lev. xxv. 9), but according to practice it was used for the New Year as well.

in the new moon] The Targum expressly states that the new moon of Tisri is meant here, and there is no sufficient reason for setting aside this ancient Jewish tradition and supposing that the new moon of Nisan, the first month of the ecclesiastical year, is meant, on the ground that the contents of the Psalm shew that the festival at the full moon referred to in the next line must be the Passover.

in the time appointed &c.] Better, **at the full moon, for the day of our feast.** If the month referred to is Tisri, *our feast* must be the Feast of Tabernacles, which began at the full moon on the 15th of that month. It was often called simply "the feast" (1 Kings viii. 2, &c.), and was regarded as the most joyous of all the feasts. The trumpet

For this *was* a statute for Israel, 4
And a law of the God of Jacob.
This he ordained in Joseph *for* a testimony, 5
When he went out through the land of Egypt:
Where I heard a language *that* I understood not.

I removed his shoulder from the burden: 6

blowing at the beginning of the month is regarded as pointing forward to it, and it was repeated on the day itself, in accordance with the law of Num. x. 10.

4, 5. The reason for the celebration in the divine appointment of the festival as a memorial of God's goodness to Israel.

4. For it is a statute for Israel,
An ordinance of the God of Jacob. (R.V.)

It refers to the feast. The title *God of Jacob* carries our thoughts back beyond the Exodus to the providential dealings of Jehovah with the great ancestor of the nation (Gen. xlvi. 2 ff.).

5. He appointed it in Joseph for a testimony (R.V.): to bear continual witness to His care of Israel. *when* &c.] Render, **When he** (i.e. God) **went out against** (or *over*) **the land of Egypt**, to execute judgement upon the Egyptians. See Ex. xi. 4.

where *I heard a language* that *I understood not*] The poet identifies himself with his nation and speaks in the name of Israel of old. It was an aggravation of their misery that they were toiling for masters whose language they could not understand. This meaning however, though Ps. cxiv. 1 offers a parallel, is hardly adequate here. It is possible to render, **The speech of one that I know not do I hear**, and to regard the line as the words of the poet himself, introducing the divine oracle which follows. He suddenly breaks off, hearing a supernatural voice addressing him. Cp. Job iv. 16; and for the introduction of God as the speaker, Ps. lx. 6; lxii. 11. But it is difficult to see how the poet could speak of God as *one whom I know not:* the phrase must surely mean more than 'strange,' 'unearthly': and it is preferable to render, **The speech of one that I knew not did I hear.** The Psalmist speaks in the person of Israel at the time of the Exodus. This he can do, since Israel of all time is one in virtue of the continuity of its national life. Israel then *began to hear* Jehovah (such is the proper force of the tense in the original), Whom it had not yet learned to know as the self-revealing God of redemption, speaking to it in the wondrous works of the deliverance from Egypt. See Ex. iii. 13; vi. 2 ff., 7. The substance of the words which Israel heard in Egypt is given in the next verse, which contains God's decree for Israel's liberation from servitude:

6. I have removed his shoulder from the burden:
His hands shall go free from the basket.

The term 'basket' does not occur in Exodus, but baskets for carrying the burdens of bricks or clay so often referred to in Exodus (i. 11; ii. 11; v. 4, 5; vi. 6, 7) are frequently represented in Egyptian paintings.

His hands were delivered from the pots.
7 Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee;
I answered thee in the secret place of thunder:
I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. Selah.
8 Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee:
O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me;
9 There shall no strange god be in thee;
Neither shalt thou worship *any* strange god.
10 I *am* the LORD thy God,

From the pots (A.V.), i.e. *from making the pots* (P.B.V.), is an improbable explanation.

The P.B.V. in *v.* 5, "when he came out of the land of Egypt and had heard a strange language," is derived through the Vulg. from the LXX. Similarly Jerome; but it is probably only a conjectural rendering of a difficult passage, and does not represent a different text.

7. From the divine decree for Israel's liberation the transition to an address to Israel is easy. Israel of the present is regarded as one with Israel of the past.

Thou calledst &c.] For the phrase cp. l. 15; and for the fact, Ex. ii. 23 ff.

in the secret place of thunder] In the covert of the thunder-cloud God conceals and reveals Himself (xviii. 11, 13; lxxvii. 17 ff.). At the passage of the Red Sea, when Israel was sore afraid and cried out unto Jehovah, He "looked forth upon the host of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and of cloud, and discomfited the host of the Egyptians" (Ex. xiv. 10, 24).

I proved thee at the waters of Meribah] Testing thy faith and obedience. The name Meribah or *Strife* was a reminder of repeated unbelief and ingratitude (Ex. xvii. 7; Num. xx. 13; Ps. lxxviii. 20); of the long 'controversy' (Mic. vi. 2) of a long-suffering God with an obstinate people. It is possible that the reference to this miracle in particular was suggested by the libations of water at the Feast of Tabernacles, which commemorated the supply of water in the wilderness.

8—10. Israel's duty of allegiance to Jehovah alone; the fundamental principle of the covenant. Israel in the wilderness is primarily addressed, but Israel of every age is included.

8. *Hear...and I will testify unto thee*] Or, **I will protest unto thee**, of solemn warning and exhortation. Cp. l. 7; and numerous passages in Deuteronomy, e.g. vi. 4; v. 1, 6; iv. 26; xxx. 19: xxxi. 28.

if thou wilt hearken &c.] Better as R.V., **if thou wouldest hearken unto me**!

9. *no strange god*] Cp. xliv. 20; Deut. xxxii. 16.

any *strange god*] **Any alien god.** Cp. Deut. xxxii. 12. Absolute fidelity to Jehovah was the fundamental principle of the Sinaitic covenant, embodied in the first 'word' of the Decalogue.

Which brought thee out of the land of Egypt:
Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.
But my people would not hearken to my voice; 11
And Israel would none of me.
So I gave them up unto their own heart's lust: 12
And they walked in their own counsels.
O that my people had hearkened unto me, 13
And Israel had walked in my ways!
I should soon have subdued their enemies, 14
And turned my hand against their adversaries.
The haters of the LORD should have submitted themselves 15
unto him:
But their time should have endured for ever.

10. I am Jehovah thy God,
Which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Cp. Ex. xx. 2 ff.; Deut. xx. 1. To Jehovah Israel owed its existence. The fact that He redeemed it from Egypt constituted His claim upon its allegiance. Cp. 1 John iv. 10.

open &c.] God is ready liberally to satisfy all their needs. Cp. Matt. vii. 7, 11.

11, 12. Israel's disobedience and its punishment.

11. But my people hearkened not to my voice. For *my people... Israel* in a similar complaint see Is. i. 3.

12. So I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart,
That they might walk in their own counsels. (R.V.).

God punishes men by leaving them to their own self-willed courses of action, which prove their ruin. Cp. Job viii. 4; Prov. i. 30 ff.; Rom. i. 24 ff.; 2 Thess. ii. 10 ff. 'Stubbornness' is a favourite word with Jeremiah (vii. 24, &c.), occurring elsewhere only in Deut. xxix. 19.

Most editions both of the Bible and of the Prayer Book wrongly print *hearts'* for *heart's*. See Scrivener, *Auth. Ed. of Engl. Bible*, p. 152, and *Earle, Psalter of* 1539, p. 313.

13—16. Yet God's mercy is inexhaustible. Even now if Israel would obey Him, He would subdue their enemies, and bless them abundantly.

13. O that my people were hearkening unto me,
That Israel would walk in my ways!
14. I should soon subdue their enemies,
And turn my hand against their adversaries.

In my ways is the contrast to *in their own counsels.* (Jer. vii. 23, 24.) The hand which is now turned against Israel in chastisement would be turned against their enemies.

15. The haters of Jehovah should come cringing unto him,
So that their time should be for ever.

16 He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat:
And *with* honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.

Unto him may mean *to Jehovah* or *to Israel*; but apparently the latter. Jehovah's enemies are the enemies of His people, and He would force them to pay homage, however reluctantly (lxvi. 3 note), to Israel; that so Israel's time of prosperity might know no end, the nation's life never fail.

16. Tense and person both present serious difficulties, and it seems necessary to emend the text of the first line, and read:

Yea, I would feed him with the fat of wheat,
And with honey out of the rock would I satisfy thee.

Him = Israel. The transition to direct address in *l.* 2 ('thee') seems harsh, but is not uncommon in Heb. The third person 'them' or 'him' in LXX, Jer., Syr., is probably only a correction to avoid it. We have here another reminiscence of Deut. xxxii, *vv.* 13, 14. Cp. cxlvii. 14. To an obedient people God would fulfil His ancient promises of blessing. Cp. Ex. iii. 8; Deut. vii. 12, 13; viii. 6 ff.

PSALM LXXXII.

This Psalm is a vision of judgement. It sets forth, in a highly poetical and imaginative form, the responsibility of earthly judges to the Supreme Judge, Whose representatives they are, and from Whom they derive their authority. The dramatic form, the representation of God as the Judge, and the introduction of God Himself as the speaker, are characteristics common to several of the Asaphic Psalms. See Pss. l, lxxv, lxxxi.

God takes His stand as Judge in a solemn assembly: His delegates appear before His tribunal (1).

Sternly He upbraids them for their injustice and partiality, and bids them remember what the duties of their office are (2—4).

But they are incapable of reformation, and the foundations of society are being shaken by their misconduct. Though they bear the lofty title of gods, they shall share the common fate of men (5—7).

The Psalmist concludes with a prayer that God will Himself assume the government of the world (8).

In Ps. l the nation of Israel is assembled for judgement: here the authorities of the nation who have abused their trust are put upon their trial. The evil complained of has been common in Oriental countries in all ages, and ancient Israel was no exception. Exhortations to maintain the purity of justice are common in the Law: complaints of its maladministration are frequent in the Prophets. One passage in particular—Is. iii. 13 ff.—presents a close parallel. "Jehovah standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the peoples. Jehovah will enter into judgement with the elders of His people, and the princes thereof: for ye —ye have devoured the vineyard: the spoil of the afflicted is in your

houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the afflicted? saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts."

The authorities of the nation are called *gods* (*vv.* 1, 6) as being the representatives of God, *sons of the Most High* (*v.* 6) as exercising a power delegated by the supreme Ruler of the world. The judgement which they give is God's (Deut. i. 17). Even if it be held that *Elōhīm* should be rendered *God* rather than *the judges* in Ex. xxi. 6; xxii. 8, 9, 28; 1 Sam. ii. 25, it is clear that the administration of justice at the sanctuary by those who were regarded as the representatives of God is meant in these passages, and the direct application of the title *Elōhīm* to judges in the Psalm is fully intelligible. This interpretation is the oldest, for it is not only given by the Targum, but was that generally current in our Lord's time, as is clear from His use of the passage in John x. 34 ff., and it is the simplest and most natural. Two other explanations however require notice.

(i) Some commentators think that the Psalm refers to foreign rulers, by whom the nation of Israel was being oppressed. The prayer of *v.* 8, it is said, proves that the reference cannot be merely to the injustice of Israelite judges, for God is entreated to arise and judge the world. But the judgement of Israel is often regarded as part of a universal judgement. See Ps. vii. 6 ff.: and particularly the passage of Isaiah already referred to, where Jehovah is standing up to judge *the peoples*, when He summons the elders and princes of Israel to account for oppressing their poor countrymen. The language of *vv.* 2—4 tallies exactly with the language used elsewhere of the oppression of poor and defenceless Israelites by the rich and powerful: there is not the slightest hint that the terms 'poor' and 'afflicted' are transferred to Israel as a nation. And lastly, though heathen princes claimed divine titles (Ezek. xxviii. 2, 6; Is. xiv. 14) it is improbable that the Psalmist would acknowledge their right to them as he does.

(ii) Others think that by *Elōhīm* angels are meant, and hold that the Psalm refers generally to God's judgement upon unjust judges in heaven and earth; or more particularly to the judgement of the patron-angels of the nations. This view, proposed by Bleek, is adopted by Cheyne, who says, "The charge brought against these patron-angels of the nations (see Dan. x, xii) is that they have (in the persons of their human subordinates) permitted such gross violence and injustice, that the moral bases of the earth are shaken." If this view is to be adopted, it is certainly the case that "no Psalm makes a stronger demand than this on the historic imagination of the interpreter." But (1) as has already been remarked in the note on lviii. 1 with reference to a similar interpretation of that Psalm, there is nothing in the context to justify the importation of an idea which belongs to the later development of Jewish theology. (2) The idea that angels can be punished with death is startling, and foreign to the O.T. view of angelic nature. (3) There is not the slightest hint that *vv.* 2—4 refer to anything but the oppression of men by men. The language, as has been pointed out above, closely resembles that of the Law and the Prophets, and there is no reason for taking it in a non-natural sense.

There is nothing in the Psalm to fix its date. The evils complained

of were constantly recurring, especially of course when the central government was weak.

This Psalm is the Psalm for the third day of the week in the ancient Jewish liturgy. See *Introd.* p. xxiv.

A Psalm of Asaph.

82 God standeth in the congregation of the mighty;
He judgeth among the gods.
2 How long will ye judge unjustly,
And accept the persons of the wicked? Selah.
3 Defend the poor and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and needy.

1. A vision of God as the Judge of judges.

God] Originally no doubt *Jehovah*, for which the Elohistic editor has substituted *Elōhīm*. *standeth*] Or, *taketh his stand:* solemnly takes His place as president. Cp. Is. iii. 13 *a*; Am. vii. 7; ix. 1.

in the congregation of the mighty] I.e., as P. B. V., *of princes*. But we must rather render, **in the assembly of God** (*El*), i.e., not the congregation of Israel, though this is called *the congregation of Jehovah* (Num. xxvii. 17; cp. Ps. lxxiv. 2), but an assembly summoned and presided over by God in His capacity of Almighty Ruler.

he judgeth &c.] **In the midst of gods** (*Elōhīm*) **will he judge.** According to the view adopted above, the judges and authorities of Israel are meant by *gods*. It might indeed be supposed that the poet intended to represent God as holding His court surrounded by angels, like an earthly king in the midst of his courtiers (cp. 1 Kings xxii. 19; Job i, ii); and so probably the Syriac translator understood the verse: "God standeth in the assembly of the angels, and in the midst of the angels will He judge." But *Elōhīm* can hardly have a different meaning from that which it has in *v.* 6, where it clearly refers to the judges who are put on their trial; and the address in *v.* 2 would be unintelligible if the persons addressed had not already been mentioned.

2—4. God speaks, arraigning the judges for injustice and partiality, and bidding them perform their duties faithfully.

2. *accept the persons*] Or, as R.V., **respect the persons,** shewing partiality to the rich and powerful. Strict impartiality in the administration of justice is frequently enjoined in the Law. Favouring the poor is condemned as well as favouring the rich. See Ex. xxiii. 2, 3, 6—8; Lev. xix. 15, 35; Deut. i. 17; xvi. 18 ff.: cp. Prov. xviii. 5; xxiv. 23. The music strikes up to emphasise the question, and as it were give time for an answer. But the judges have no defence, and God proceeds to remind them of their duty.

3. Judge the weak and fatherless:
Do justice to the afflicted and destitute.

Deliver the poor and needy:
Rid *them* out of the hand of the wicked.
They know not, neither will they understand; 5
They walk on in darkness:
All the foundations of the earth are out of course.
I have said, Ye *are* gods; 6
And all of you *are* children of the most High.
But ye shall die like men, 7

4. Rescue the weak and needy:
Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked.

Cp. Is. i. 17; x. 1, 2. Human authorities are God's representatives to see that the weak and friendless have justice done them. See Ex. xxii. 22 ff.; Deut. x. 17, 18; Ps. x. 14, 18; Mal. iii. 5: and comp. the portrait of the ideal ruler in Ps. lxxii. 12 ff.; Is. xi. 3, 4.

5—7. The character of these judges described and their sentence pronounced.

5. God is still the speaker; but instead of addressing the culprits, He describes their incorrigible blindness and obstinacy, before He pronounces sentence on them. **They have no knowledge, neither will they get understanding,** though these are the needful qualifications for a judge (1 Kings iii. 9 ff.): **they walk on to and fro in darkness,** complacently self-satisfied with their ignorance and moral darkness: and consequently **all the foundations of the earth are shaken,** the principles upon which the moral order of the world is based are imperilled. Cp. xi. 3, lxxv. 3, for the metaphor; and generally, Prov. ii. 10—15.

6. I said, Ye are gods,
And all of you sons of the Most High (R.V.).

I is emphatic. It is by God's appointment that they have been invested with divine authority to execute judgement in His name. Cp. the language used of the king, ii. 7; lxxxix. 27.

To the words of this verse our Lord appealed (John x. 34 ff.), when the Jews accused Him of blasphemy because He claimed to be one with God. In virtue of their call to a sacred office as representatives of God the judges of old time were called gods and sons of the Most High, and this in spite of their unworthiness. Was it then blasphemy, He asked, for one who had received a special consecration and commission as God's representative, one whose life and work bore witness to that consecration, to call Himself the Son of God?

On the surface this may seem to be a verbal argument such as the Jews themselves would have used; but the real significance of the quotation lies deeper. The fact that it was possible for men so to represent God as to be called gods or divine was a foreshadowing of the Incarnation. "There lay already in the Law the germ of the truth which Christ announced, the union of God and man." Bp Westcott.

7. *But*] R.V., **Nevertheless.** Though they bear this high title, it

And fall like one of the princes.
8 Arise, O God, judge the earth:
For thou shalt inherit all nations.

will not exempt them from punishment. They shall die like common men, and fall like any other princes whose ruin is recorded in history (Hos. vii. 7). Or is there an allusion to the princes mentioned in lxxxiii. 9 ff.?

8. The Psalmist has watched the trial and condemnation of Israel's judges; and the sight stirs him to appeal to God Himself to assume the office of Judge not only for Israel but for all the world. If Israel's judges have failed so lamentably in their duty towards their own countrymen, how can Israel rule the world, though all the nations have been promised to its kings for their inheritance (ii. 8)? Nay, God Himself—THOU is emphatic—must take possession of all the nations as their Sovereign and their Judge.

PSALM LXXXIII.

The vision of the judgement of unjust rulers who oppress God's people within the nation is followed by a prayer for the judgement of the nations which threaten to destroy God's people as a nation from without. The nations around are represented as joining in an unhallowed confederacy against Israel. Their aim is nothing less than to frustrate the counsel of God, and blot the very name of Israel out of remembrance. The ancient enemies of Israel, the Moabites and Ammonites, are the leaders of the coalition; with them are united the Edomites, Amalekites, and Arabian tribes from the desert: Philistia, Tyre, and even Assyria, appear as their auxiliaries.

In spite of the apparent definiteness of the historical circumstances, it is impossible to fix the occasion of the Psalm with any certainty.

(i) Many commentators connect it with the events related in 1 Macc. v. Provoked by the success of Judas in restoring the Temple, "the nations round about"..."took counsel to destroy the generation of Jacob that was among them, and thereupon they began to slay and destroy the people." Judas accordingly turned his arms against them, and of the tribes and nations named in the Psalm, the Edomites, Ammonites, Philistines, and Tyrians are mentioned among the enemies whom he defeated. The Ishmaelites and perhaps Gebal and the Hagarenes might be included among the Arabians (*v.* 39); but the Moabites no longer existed as an independent nation, and the Amalekites had long been destroyed (1 Chr. iv. 42 f.). It is assumed that the names of ancient enemies are vaguely used for the tribes inhabiting the territories which formerly belonged to them, or are introduced to heighten the effect. Assyria is supposed to mean Syria, or possibly the Samaritans. But (1) the narrative of 1 Macc. does not speak, as the Psalm does, of a confederacy. (2) The prominence of "the children of Lot" in the Psalm does not suit a time when Moab had ceased to exist. (3) While it is

possible that Asshur might mean Syria, it is hardly possible that the most bitter enemies of the Jews could be mentioned merely as the auxiliaries of less important nations.

(ii) Other commentators think that the Psalm refers to the coalition against Jehoshaphat described in 2 Chron. xx. Upon that occasion the Moabites and Ammonites took the leading part: they were joined by Arabians[1] and Edomites, and the combined forces made their rendezvous in Edom[2] before invading Judah. The aim of the invaders (2 Chr. xx. 11) corresponds to that described in the Psalm, and the result of the victory (*v.* 29) is the confession of Jehovah's power for which the Psalmist prays; while the prominent part taken by the Asaphite Levite Jahaziel gives a link of connexion with an Asaphite Psalm. But of the nations named in the Psalm the Ishmaelites and Hagarenes, Gebal and Amalek, Philistia, Tyre, and Assyria, are not mentioned in Chronicles. Even if we could suppose that the Ishmaelites, Hagarenes and Gebal correspond to the Meunites, and that Amalek is included in Edom (Gen. xxxvi. 12), there is no hint that the coalition against Jehoshaphat was supported by the Philistines and Phoenicians, though we learn from Amos i. 6, 9, that they were in alliance with Edom against Judah at an early date; while the mention of Assyria at this period, even as an auxiliary, is isolated and perplexing.

(iii) Others again refer the Psalm to the Persian period, and connect it with the opposition to the rebuilding of the city described in Nehemiah iv. 1 ff., 7 ff., where Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites are mentioned among the enemies of Judah. In this case Asshur must stand for Persia, as in Ezra vi. 22. Robertson Smith (*Old Test. in Jewish Ch.* ed. 2, p. 439) refers it to the time of Artaxerxes Ochus, c. 350 B.C., or later. But the circumstances of the first occasion present no really close correspondence to the situation described in the Psalm; and of the details of the time of Ochus we are wholly ignorant.

In fact history records no one single occasion upon which the nations and tribes mentioned in the Psalm were united in a confederacy against Israel. On the whole, the invasion recorded in 2 Chron. xx offers the closest parallel and the best illustration, and the Psalm may have been written with reference to it. It is possible that nations which did not actually join the confederacy may have threatened to do so; or enemies of Israel, actual and possible, past and present, are enumerated in order to heighten the effect, and forcibly represent the formidable nature of the danger. Poetry is not history, and as Bishop Perowne observes, "divine inspiration does not change the laws of the imagination, though it may control them for certain ends."

It is of course possible that the Psalm refers to some episode in Jewish history of which no record has been preserved; nor must the possibility be excluded that the Psalm is not historical but, so to speak, ideal. A poet, pondering on such a passage as Micah iv. 11—13, at

[1] For the corrupt reading of the Mass. Text in *v.* 1 *some of the Ammonites* we should probably read with the LXX *some of the Meünīm* (1 Chr. iv. 41; 2 Chr. xxvi 7). Josephus (*Ant.* IX. 1, 2) says that the Moabites and Ammonites took with them a great body of Arabians.

[2] For *Aram* (Syria) in *v.* 2 *Edom* must certainly be read.

a time when neighbouring nations were menacing Judah, might expand that prophecy in a concrete form into the prayer of this Psalm, that, though enemies from every side should conspire to destroy Israel, Jehovah would frustrate their schemes, and make their malice an occasion for the exhibition of His own supremacy.

The Psalm falls into two main divisions.

i. The Psalmist prays that God will not remain an inert and indifferent spectator, while enemies close in upon His people from every side with intent to destroy them utterly (1—8).

ii. May He discomfit them as He discomfited the Midianites and Canaanites of old, till they yield Him homage; or if they will not submit, may He disperse and destroy them till they are forced to acknowledge His supremacy (9—18).

A Song *or* Psalm of Asaph.

83 Keep not thou silence, O God:
Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God.
2 For lo, thine enemies make a tumult:
And they that hate thee have lift up the head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against thy people,
And consulted against thy hidden ones.

1—4. An urgent prayer that God will come to the rescue of His people, whom their enemies are conspiring to annihilate.

1. *Keep not* &c.] **O God** (*Elōhīm*), **keep not still**, lit. *let there be no rest to thee.* *hold not thy peace*] Or, **be not silent.** Cp. xxviii. 1; xxxv. 22; xxxix. 12.

be not still] **Neither take thou rest, O God** (*El*). For the phrases of this verse cp. Is. lxii. 1, 6, 7. God seems to be indifferent to the danger of His people: their enemies are mustering unrebuked: but He has only to speak the word, and their schemes will be utterly frustrated (lxxvi. 6 ff.).

2. *make a tumult*] A word denoting the uproar and tumult of a throng of people: the substantive for *multitude*, frequently used of a great army, is derived from it: cp. xlvi. 3, 6; Is. xvii. 12; xxix. 5, 7, 8; 2 Chr. xx. 2, 12, 15, 24.

thine enemies...they that hate thee] For Israel's enemies are Jehovah's enemies: their plot to destroy His people is a plot to frustrate the purposes and put an end to the worship of Jehovah. Cp. *against thee*, *v.* 5; and Judg. v. 31.

3. *They have taken...and consulted*] **They are taking...and consulting together.** Jehovah's *hidden ones* are His people whom He conceals in His pavilion in the day of trouble (xxvii. 5; xxxi. 20), those to whom He has given an asylum from their enemies. The later Greek Versions (Aq. Symm. Theod.) and Jerome read the singular, *thy secret place*, i.e. the temple, cp. Ezek. vii. 22.

They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation; 4
That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.
For they have consulted together *with one* consent: 5
They are confederate against thee:
The tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites; 6
Of Moab, and the Hagarenes;
Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek; 7
The Philistines with the inhabitants of Tyre;
Assur also is joined with them: 8

4. *from* being *a nation*] Their aim is to obliterate the name of Israel from the map of the world. For the phrase cp. Jer. xlviii. 2; and see lxxiv. 8; 1 Macc. v. 2. *that the name* &c.] More accurately, **and so the name of Israel shall be remembered no more.**

5. *they are confederate against thee*] Lit., **against thee do they make a covenant.** Cp. *v.* 2.

5—8. An enumeration of the confederate peoples. From the south-east come the Edomites, who inhabited the mountainous region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, and the Ishmaelites, who roamed over the deserts from the borders of Egypt to the north-west shore of the Persian Gulf (Gen. xxv. 18): from the east of the Dead Sea come the Moabites, and from the north-east the Hagarenes or Hagrites who lived in the neighbourhood of the Hauran, east of Gilead (1 Chr. v. 10, 19, 20);—they are mentioned in the inscriptions of Sennacherib along with the Nabatheans. Gebal is not the Gebal of Ezekiel xxvii. 9 to the north of Tyre (Byblus), but the northern part of the mountains of Edom, southward of the Dead Sea, a district known to Pliny as Gebalene. The Ammonites, ancient and bitter foes of Israel, come from their home beyond the Jordan, the Amalekites from the southern deserts between the Arabah and the Mediterranean. The maritime states of the Philistines on the west and Tyre on the north have joined them, and even the remote Assyria sends a contingent to support the confederacy.

6. *The tabernacles* &c.] **The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites,** i.e. the nomadic Edomites and Ishmaelites who dwell in tents. Cp. Hab. iii. 7. *of Moab*] Omit *of*.

7. *the Philistines*] Lit. **Philistia.** In Am. i. 6 ff., 9 ff., Philistia and Tyre are censured for surrendering Israelite captives to Edom, which in its turn (*v.* 11) is condemned for unbrotherly hostility to Israel.

8. *Assur*] **Assyria.** The mention of Assyria as an auxiliary of Moab and Ammon seems to imply that it was not yet a leading power, which would fall in with an early date for the Psalm. Assyria is not known to have come in contact with Israel until the reign of Jehu, who paid tribute to Shalmaneser II in B.C. 842. Still in the time of Jehoshaphat the Assyrians appear to have made conquests in Phoenicia

They have holpen the children of Lot. Selah.

9 Do unto them as *unto* the Midianites;
As *to* Sisera, as *to* Jabin, at the brook of Kison:
10 *Which* perished at En-dor:
They became *as* dung for the earth.
11 Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb:
Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunna:
12 Who said, Let us take to ourselves
The houses of God in possession.

and Syria, and the Ammonites might have procured help from them as they did from Syria at an earlier date (2 Sam. x. 6).

If the Psalm belongs to the Persian or Maccabaean age, Assyria must stand for Persia or Syria. Theodoret suggests that the Samaritans, as Assyrian colonists, are meant. Lagarde, followed by Cheyne, cuts the knot by reading *Geshur* for *Asshur* (see 2 Sam. iii. 3); but this petty Syrian kingdom would hardly be mentioned as an important ally.

they have holpen] Lit. *they have been an arm*, i.e. a help. Cp. Is. xxxiii. 2.

the children of Lot] The Moabites and Ammonites, who seem to be singled out as the leaders of the confederacy. Cp. 2 Chron. xx. 1. The phrase occurs in Deut. ii. 9, 19, the only other passages outside of Genesis where Lot is mentioned. It points to the unbrotherly character of the hostility of these nations by recalling their common descent.

9—12. Prayer for their destruction as the Canaanites were destroyed by Deborah and Barak, and the Midianites by Gideon.

9. Do thou unto them as unto Midian;
As unto Sisera, as unto Jabin, at the torrent of Kishon.

The victory of Gideon over the confederate forces of the Midianites, Amalekites, and Arabians (Judg. vii, viii) is referred to by Isaiah as a typical triumph (ix. 4; x. 26). They fell, like Jehoshaphat's enemies (2 Chr. xx. 23), by one another's hands. For the rout of the Canaanites see Judg. iv, v. The storm-swollen torrent of the Kishon contributed to the victory (Judg. v. 21).

10. En-dor is not mentioned in the narrative of Judges, but it was situated in the same valley as Taanach and Megiddo, which are named in Judg. v. 19, and is mentioned along with them in Josh. xvii. 11.

as *dung*] Omit *as*. A contemptuous expression for the fate of unburied corpses. Cp. 2 Kings ix. 37; Jer. viii. 2; &c.

11. The Psalmist returns to Gideon's victory. Oreb and Zeeb ('Raven' and 'Wolf') were the princes, i.e. generals, of the Midianites (Judg. vii. 25; Is. x. 26); Zebah and Zalmunna were the kings of Midian (Judg. viii. 5 ff., 12, 18 ff.).

12. Who have said, Let us take for ourselves in possession
The habitations (or, *pastures*) **of God.**

Who refers to the present enemies of Israel, not to the Midianites.

O my God, make them like a wheel; 13
As the stubble before the wind.
As the fire burneth a wood, 14
And as the flame setteth the mountains on fire;
So persecute them with thy tempest, 15
And make them afraid with thy storm.
Fill their faces *with* shame; 16
That they may seek thy name, O LORD.
Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; 17

God's habitations or pastures are the land which He has given to His people Israel. Cp. 2 Chr. xx. 11. The LXX reads *altar*, or according to another reading, *sanctuary*.

13—18. Renewed prayer for the dispersion and destruction of the enemy expressed by figures from nature. The final end and object of all is that they may acknowledge Jehovah to be supreme.

13. *make them like a wheel*] Rather, **like whirling dust** or **chaff.** Anything whirled away before the wind may be meant. Thomson (*Land and Book*, p. 563) thinks that the globular heads of the wild artichoke may be meant. They are light as a feather, and in the autumn when they break off from the parent stem "thousands of them come scudding over the plain, rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and rider." The Arabs, who call it *'akkūb*, "derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: 'May you be whirled like the *'akkūb* before the wind.'"

as the stubble] **As stubble.** Dry, light, broken straw, whirled away from the threshing floor, which was usually in an exposed situation to catch the wind, is meant. Cp. Is. xvii. 13; xxix. 5; Jer. xiii. 24; Ps. i. 4.

14, 15. As fire that consumeth a forest,
And as flame that burneth up mountains;
So shalt thou pursue them with thy tempest,
And dismay them with thy hurricane.

God's wrath is a fiery blast which at once kindles and fans the flame (Is. xxix. 6; xxx. 27, 30, 33), and pursues and consumes His enemies like a fire in the forest or on the mountains. "Before the rains came," says Thomson (*Land and Book*, p. 341), "this whole mountain side was in a blaze. Thorns and briars grow so luxuriantly here that they must be burned off always before the plough can operate. The peasants watch for a high wind, and then the fire catches easily, and spreads with great rapidity." Cp. Is. x. 16—19; Jer. xxi. 14.

16. *Fill their faces* with *shame*] Or, **disgrace.** Let them be disgraced by defeat and disappointed in their project. But this is only as the means to the higher end, that they may seek Jehovah's name, recognising in Israel's God the God of revelation, and submitting themselves to His Will.

Yea, let them be put to shame, and perish:
18 That *men* may know that thou, whose name alone *is*
JEHOVAH,
Art the most High over all the earth.

17. Let them be ashamed and dismayed for ever;
Yea, let them be put to confusion and perish:
18. That they may know that thou, whose name is JEHOVAH,
even thou alone,
Art the Most High over all the earth.

The primary object of chastisement is conversion (*v.* 16); but if they will not acknowledge Israel's God as the God of revelation, let them be compelled by reiterated judgements to recognise Him as the Almighty Ruler. Cp. Is. xxxvii. 20; 2 Chr. xx. 29. The ruin with which they threaten God's people will recoil upon themselves (vi. 10; xxxv. 4, 26). For 'know' see lix. 13: and generally, cp. xcvii. 8, 9; Is. xxvi. 9—11.

PSALM LXXXIV.

With Ps. lxxxiii the Asaphite division of the Elohistic collection ends; and Pss. lxxxiv—lxxxix form an appendix to that collection, which shews but few indications of the hand of the Elohistic editor. It can however still be traced in Ps. lxxxiv in the phrase *Jehovah Elōhīm Tsebāōth* (*v.* 8), and in the absolute use of *God* (*v.* 9), by the side of *Jehovah* (*vv.* 1, 2, 3, 8, 11, 12).

Ps. lxxxiv is a companion poem to Pss. xlii—xliii. It is animated by the same spirit of enthusiastic devotion to the service of God and love for the worship of the Temple. It makes use of the same expressions (e.g. *tabernacles*, or *dwelling-place*, *v.* 1; *the living God*, *v.* 2; *appear before God*, *v.* 7); and it presents the same structure of three equal stanzas, which are divided by musical interludes, instead of by refrains as in Pss. xlii—xliii.

These Psalms may have been written by the same poet, though under widely different circumstances. In Pss. xlii—xliii the leading motive is the pain of being debarred from approaching the sanctuary: in Ps. lxxxiv it is joy at the privilege of access to it. The author's feet seem to be already standing in the gates of Jerusalem. It is virtually a pilgrim song, though it is not included in the special collection of "Songs of Going up" (*Introd.* p. xxv).

It clearly belongs to a time when the Temple was standing, and its services were regularly carried on; and if *thine anointed* (*v.* 9) refers (as it is most natural to suppose) to the king, it must be assigned to the period of the monarchy. But more than this it is impossible to say. Some attempts to fix the date of the companion Pss. xlii—xliii have been considered in the introduction to those Psalms, and shewn to be improbable. Certainly it cannot, as Delitzsch supposes, be so early as the time of David. The Temple is a permanent building with courts and chambers annexed to it for resident ministers; its services appear to

be of long standing; and pilgrimages to it are an established part of the national religious life.

But as "the Psalter in its spiritual fulness belongs to no special time," so "this Psalm is the hymn of the Divine life in all ages. It brings before us *the grace and the glory* of sacrifice, of service, of progress, where God alone, the Lord of Hosts, is the source and the strength and the end of effort." (Bp Westcott.)

The Psalm is divided into three equal stanzas by *Selah*, marking a musical interlude after *vv.* 4 and 8. At first sight this division seems unsatisfactory, because it separates verses of similar form and meaning; and it may be thought preferable to treat the Ps. as consisting of two stanzas only: *vv.* 1—7; 8—12. But the triple division is probably right, and corresponds to the triple division of Pss. xlii—xliii. The second and third stanzas open with words suggested by the close of the first and second stanzas respectively, and the connexion of thought appears to be as follows:

i. The Psalmist's eager longing for the house of God (1, 2); the happiness of those who dwell there (3, 4).

ii. Happy too are those who in the strength of God surmount all obstacles, and appearing in His Presence offer their prayers (5—8).

iii. The preciousness of the privilege of access to God, Who is the unfailing source of blessing for those who trust in Him (9—12).

Beside Pss. xlii—xliii, Pss. xxvii, lxi, lxiii should be compared.

On the title, **For the chief Musician; set to the Gittith. A Psalm of the sons of Korah** (R.V.), see *Introd.* pp. xix, xxiii, and pp. 223 ff.

To the chief Musician upon Gittith, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

How amiable *are* thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! 84
My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the 2
LORD:

1, 2. The Psalmist's delight in the house of God.

1. *How amiable* are *thy tabernacles*] Or, **How dear is thy dwelling-place.** *Amiable* is no longer used of things, in the sense of *worthy to be loved*. For *dwelling-place* see note on xxvi. 8. The plural of the original, as in xliii. 3, may be 'amplificative,' expressing the dignity of the house of God; or it may be used with reference to the various buildings of which the Temple was composed.

LORD of hosts] See note on xlvi. 7.

2. My soul hath pined, yea, even fainted. The verbs are perfects, and it seems best to suppose that he is recalling the earnest longings which are even now finding satisfaction, as his feet stand in the Temple courts, and his heart and flesh **sing for joy** unto the living God. The latter verb denotes joyous singing, such as that with which pilgrims enlivened their journey. Cp. Jer. xxxi. 12; and the cognate substantive in Ps. xlii. 4. *Soul*, *heart*, and *flesh*, the emotions, the reason and the will, with the living organism of the body through which they act, make up the whole man. See xvi. 9; lxxiii. 26; and cp. 1 Thess. v. 23.

My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God.
3 Yea, the sparrow hath found a house,
And the swallow a nest for herself, where she may lay her young,
Even thine altars, O LORD of hosts, my King, and my God.
4 Blessed *are* they that dwell in thy house:
They will be still praising thee. Selah.

the living God] The same phrase (*El chay*) as in xlii. 2. God Himself is the final object of desire: the Temple is only the means of realising His Presence.

3, 4. The happiness of those who find a home in the Temple.

3. The Psalmist envies the privilege of the birds which build their nests within the precincts of the Temple. If even they are allowed to find a home there, surely he may expect a welcome. As at an earlier time the surrounding scenery was eloquent to the poet of his own misfortunes (xlii. 7), so now a feature in the Temple courts expresses the longing of his heart. No doubt the figure is abruptly introduced. The picture is painted, and left to the reader to interpret. But it is unnecessary to suppose that the text is defective, and must be emended by the insertion of words to give the sense: 'Birds have their nests, and so have I found (or rather, would I fain find) a home by thine altars.' The direct address to God is not out of place, because though the Psalmist does not directly mean himself by the sparrow and swallow, his own longing breaks through the figure and moulds the language.

sparrow...swallow] Cp. Prov. xxvi. 2. *Tsippōr*, rendered *sparrow*, is a generic term for small birds: *drōr* is rendered *dove* by the LXX, Targ., and Syr., but probably means *swallow*. In ancient Greece as in the East the birds which nested in temples were accounted sacred. Comp. the story of Aristodicus at the temple of Branchidae (Herodotus i. 159); and "still the swallow seeks the temple enclosure at Jerusalem, and the mosque of Omar, as a secure and safe nesting-place." (Tristram, *Nat. Hist. of the Bible*, p. 206.)

may lay] Rather, **hath laid**.

even *thine altars*] Not of course the actual altar but its neighbourhood. Or we may render, *by thine altars*.

my King and my God] See v. 2; cp. xliv. 4.

4. *Blessed*] Or, *happy*, as in i. 1; and so in *vv.* 5, 12. Not those who are "of the household of God" in the wider sense (xxiii. 6; xxvii. 4; cf. Eph. ii. 19), but the actual ministers of the Temple appear to be meant. They can be *still*, i.e. again and again, raising their Hallelujahs.

5—8. Yet not only those are happy, who reside within the precincts of the Temple, but those who in the strength of God surmounting every obstacle appear in His Presence and offer their prayers.

Blessed *is* the man whose strength *is* in thee; 5
In whose heart *are* the ways *of them.*
Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; 6
The rain also filleth the pools.
They go from strength to strength, 7

5. Happy are the men whose strength is in thee;
In whose hearts are the highways (to Zion).

Happy are those whose minds are wholly set on pilgrimage to Zion. The phrase is peculiar and *to Zion* must be supplied; but this is preferable to rendering *highways are in their hearts*, and explaining *highways* as a metaphor for right ways of life. The Targ. has, *in whose hearts is confidence*, which has been thought by some to represent a more correct reading, but is probably only a free paraphrase.

6. Passing through the vale of Baca they make it a place of springs,
Yea, the early rain clotheth it with blessings.

The word *Baca* is derived from the root which means *to weep*, but it nowhere means *weeping*, for which words of a different form are used. Here, as in 2 Sam. v. 23, it probably denotes some kind of balsam-tree, so called from the 'tears' of gum which it exudes. The vale of Baca or the balsam-trees was some vale which, like the vale of Elah or the terebinth (1 Sam. xvii. 2), and the vale of Shittim or acacias, took its name from the trees which grew there. Balsam-trees are said to love dry situations, growing plentifully for example in the arid valley of Mecca; and this is clearly the point of the reference. The vale of Baca was some waterless and barren valley through which pilgrims passed on their way to Jerusalem; but faith turns it into a place of springs, finding refreshment under the most untoward circumstances, while God refreshes them with showers of blessing from above, as the autumnal rains clothe the dry plains with grass and flowers. Cp. Is. xxxv. 1 ff., 6 ff.; xli. 18 ff.; and see Tristram's *Natural Hist. of the Bible*, pp. 30, 455, for a graphic description of the marvellous way in which the rains in Palestine transform the country from a brown and dusty desert to a lovely garden. Once more we have to note the singularly bold use of metaphor which is characteristic of this poet.

The familiar phrase 'the vale of tears' comes from the Vulg. *vallis lacrimarum*, and it is possible that such an allusion to the derivation of the word is intended. It is natural to regard the pilgrim's experience as a parable of the pilgrimage of life, but this secondary application must not be allowed to supersede the original meaning.

This verse has suffered a strange fate in translation. The English Versions follow Jewish authorities in taking *berāchōth* as the plural of *berēchāh*, 'a pool,' not, as it must be, of *berāchāh*, 'blessing.' The LXX renders, *The lawgiver shall give blessings*, taking *mōreh* to be connected with *tōrāh*, law: and similarly Jerome, *The teacher shall be clothed with blessing*, a rendering followed by Luther.

7. *They go from strength to strength*] Instead of fainting on

Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.
8 O LORD God *of* hosts, hear my prayer:
Give ear, O God of Jacob. Selah.
9 Behold, O God our shield,
And look upon the face of thine anointed.

their toilsome journey they gain fresh strength as they advance. Cp. Is. xl. 31, and for the form of expression, John i. 16; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

every one of them *in Zion*] Better as R.V., **every one of them appeareth before God in Zion.** The words *every one of them* are not in the original, but may legitimately be supplied, the use of the verb in the singular individualising the different members of the company.

The LXX read *El Elōhīm*, 'God of Gods,' for *ĕl Elōhīm*, 'unto God,' and thence, through the Vulg., came Coverdale's rendering, *And so the God of Gods apeareth vnto thē in Sion.* The P.B.V., while giving the right construction to the Heb. sentence, has retained *God of Gods*.

appeareth before God] The technical term for visiting the sanctuary at the great Festivals. Cp. xlii. 2, note.

8. A prayer for favourable audience, uttered apparently by the Psalmist as the leader of the pilgrims on their arrival in the Temple.

9—12. The pilgrims' prayer, and the ground of their confidence.

9. The Psalmist's prayer for favourable audience in *v.* 8 is succeeded, after a musical interlude (*selah*), by a prayer offered by all the pilgrims together. Contrast '*our* shield' with '*my* prayer' (*v.* 8), and the singular which recurs in *v.* 10.

The first line admits of two renderings. (1) As in the A.V., 'our shield' may be taken as a vocative in apposition to God, Who is styled a shield in *v.* 11, and frequently elsewhere, e.g. iii. 3; xxviii. 7; lix. 11; Gen. xv. 1. (2) As in R.V. marg., *Behold our shield, O God*, 'our shield' may be taken as the object of the verb, in parallelism with and referring to 'thine anointed' in the next line. This rendering is commended by the parallelism, and not excluded by the order of the words in the original: the king is styled 'our shield' in lxxxix. 18 (R.V.), and there is nothing unnatural in the application in the same context of the same epithet to the king and to God, Whose representative the king was acknowledged to be.

look upon the face of thine anointed] Graciously accept him. But who is meant by *thine anointed?* Is it the king, the high-priest, or the people? Those who maintain that the Psalm is post-exilic suppose that the high-priest or the people is thus designated. But though the high-priest is called *the anointed priest* (Lev. iv. 3, 5, 16; vi. 22), he is never called *the anointed of Jehovah:* and it is very doubtful whether this title is ever applied to the people. Ps. lxxxix. 38 and Hab. iii. 13 are quoted, but do not establish the usage. The most natural explanation is that the king is meant. Nor is the prayer out of place. The welfare of the nation was bound up with the welfare of the king. And if the king was

For a day in thy courts *is* better than a thousand. 10
I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.
For the LORD God *is* a sun and shield: 11

one who like Hezekiah or Josiah had effected a great reformation, the Psalmist might well feel that the religious privileges which he prized depended upon the continuance of the king's life. It certainly cannot be inferred from the words that the Psalmist was himself a king, but rather the reverse.

10. *For a day* &c.] The connexion of thought is obscure. *For* apparently introduces a reason for the foregoing prayer. A 'good day,' i.e. a day of festivity and rejoicing, was regarded as a propitious occasion for preferring requests (1 Sam. xxv. 8). A day spent in Jehovah's courts was better than a thousand others, and therefore the most opportune occasion for this prayer. Some commentators connect this verse with *vv.* 1—7, taking *vv.* 8, 9 as parenthetical, and regard it as giving the reason for the desire to enter the Temple which is the dominant idea of the Psalm. But neither of these explanations is quite satisfactory, and the difficulty disappears if we render, **Surely a day** &c. After offering the prayer of *v.* 9 the Psalmist returns to the thought which inspires his song, the blessedness of approach to God in His house.

'*One* day' (P. B. V.) comes from the LXX through the Vulg.

I had rather be a doorkeeper] Lit., *be at the threshold*. Delitzsch thinks that this is an allusion to the office of the Korahites as "keepers of the thresholds of the tent" (1 Chron. ix. 19). If so, the reference must be to some subordinate position, and not to the distinguished office of "keeper of the threshold" (2 Kings xxii. 4; xxv. 18); for the sense clearly is, 'I had rather perform the humblest service at the temple of Him who tolerates no evil (v. 4) than be entertained as a guest where wickedness makes its home.' But the meaning may simply be, *I had rather stand*, or, *lie, at the threshold*, wait humbly at the gate as a suppliant. Cp. LXX, παραριπτεῖσθαι, Vulg. *abiectus esse*.

The tents of wickedness probably refers to the heathen neighbours of whose scoffing this Psalmist had had such a bitter experience (xlii. 3, 10). Cp. cxx. 5.

11. *a sun and shield*] R.V., **A sun and a shield**. Nowhere else in the O.T. is Jehovah directly called a sun, though the ideas conveyed by the metaphor are frequent. Cp. xxvii. 1; Is. x. 17; lx. 19, 20; Mal. iv. 2. Perhaps the prevalence of sun-worship in the East led to the avoidance of so natural and significant a metaphor. Even here the oldest Versions either had a different reading or shrank from a literal rendering. The LXX and Theodotion have: *For the Lord God loveth mercy and truth*. The Targ. paraphrases, *For the Lord God is like a high wall and a strong shield*, reading *shemesh* (=sun), but taking it in the sense of *battlement* (R.V. *pinnacles*) which it has in Is. liv. 12. The Syr. gives, *our sustainer and our helper*. Only the later Greek Versions and Jerome render the Massoretic text literally.

The LORD will give grace and glory:
No good *thing* will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.
12 O LORD of hosts,
Blessed *is* the man that trusteth in thee.

the LORD &c.] Favour (Gen. xxxix. 21), honour (lxxxv. 9; 1 Kings iii. 13), and prosperity (lxxxv. 12) are the reward of the upright. Cp. the parallel in Prov. iii. 33—35, which speaks of God's blessing on the habitation of the righteous, of His bestowal of favour on the lowly, and of the honour which is the inheritance of the wise. *Grace and glory* suggest to us ideas which were hardly in the Psalmist's mind, though his words include all divine blessings, and he would not have drawn the sharp distinction between temporal and spiritual things which we are accustomed to do. But the temporal blessings of the Old Covenant are the types of the spiritual blessings of the New; and the promise, like so many sayings in the Psalter, receives a larger sense and a spiritual meaning in the light of the Gospel. See Rom. v. 2; 1 Pet. v. 10.

them that walk uprightly] Making sincere devotion to God and perfect integrity in their dealings with men the rule of their lives. Cp. xv. 2, note; ci. 2, 6.

12. *O LORD of hosts*] The addition of *God* in P. B. V., as in *v.* 8, comes from the Roman or unrevised Latin Psalter (see p. lv), and is found in some MSS. of the LXX.

PSALM LXXXV.

The restoration of Israel from exile is a proof that God has forgiven His people and taken them back into favour as He promised (Jer. xxxiii. 8 ff.). Yet the present condition of Israel seems to shew that God's anger still rests upon it. Only a feeble remnant has returned. Disappointment and disaster are crushing them. The national life has not revived. The great hopes held out by the prophets, especially in Is. xl—lxvi, in connexion with the Return, have not been realised. And therefore the nation prays for a fresh manifestation of God's saving power to gladden His people (1—7).

Listening for an answer the Psalmist receives the assurance that God's purposes of good toward His faithful people will surely be fulfilled. He will dwell among them and bless them, fulfilling the prophetic promises of the establishment of His kingdom among men (8—13).

Such is the argument of the Psalm; and we can hardly be wrong in referring it to the early days of the Return from Babylon. The best illustration of it is to be found in the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, especially in Zech. i. 12 ff., and with this period (c. B.C. 520) it should be connected, rather than with the time of Nehemiah. It was written to meet the depression and despondency which were rapidly crushing the life out of the feeble church of the restoration, with the assurance that the prophetic promises of a glorious Messianic future were not a

delusion, but that God would establish His kingdom in His land. Thought and language shew familiarity with Is. xl—lxvi.

The Psalm falls into two divisions, (i) the pleading of mercies already received (1—3) as the ground of prayer (4—7), and (ii) the answer of hope (8—13): and it has been suggested that the first part was to be sung by the people, the second by the priest. At any rate *vv.* 1—7 may express the thoughts of the people; *vv.* 8—13 the inspired conviction of some 'soul of nobler tone,' prophet or priest, who wrote the Psalm.

The appropriateness of this Psalm as one of the Proper Psalms for Christmas Day is obvious. It is full of Messianic hopes. The Incarnation is the true answer to the prayer of Israel: and in Christ almost every word of the second part finds its fulfilment. The message of peace (Luke ii. 14), the nearness of salvation (Matt. i. 21; Luke ii. 30 ff.), the divine glory dwelling in the earth (Luke ii. 32; John i. 14), the union of lovingkindness and truth, of righteousness and peace (John i. 17; Rom. v. 1), the advent of God preceded by righteousness making a way for His people to walk in:—these blessings were imparted in Christ in a fulness and a reality far transcending anything that the Psalmist could have anticipated.

To the chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah.

LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land: 85
Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob.
Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, 2
Thou hast covered all their sin. Selah.
Thou hast taken away all thy wrath: 3
Thou hast turned *thyself* from the fierceness of thine anger.

1—3. God has forgiven and restored His people.

1. *thou hast been favourable*] Thou art propitiated: once more Thou graciously acceptest Thy people, and receivest them back into Thy favour. The ban of Jer. xiv. 10, 12 is removed. Cp. lxxvii. 7; cvi. 4; Haggai i. 8.

thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob] Or, as R.V. marg., *returned to*. But more probably the phrase means, **thou hast turned the fortune of Jacob**. See note on liii. 6. Here doubtless the restoration of the nation from the Babylonian exile is meant.

2. The Heb. words describe sin (1) as depravity or moral distortion; (2) as a wandering from the way, or missing the mark; and forgiveness (1) as the removal of a burden, (2) as the covering of the offence, which would otherwise meet the eye of the judge and call for punishment. Cp. xxxii. 1, 2, 5.

3. *Thou hast taken away*] Lit. *withdrawn*, or *drawn in*, the wrath which was let loose against us.

from the fierceness of thine anger] Poured out upon Israel for its sin. See Jer. xxx. 24; Lam. i. 12; iv. 11. Cp. Ex. xxxii. 12.

4 Turn us, O God of our salvation,
And cause thine anger towards us to cease.
5 Wilt thou be angry with us for ever?
Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations?
6 Wilt thou not revive us again:
That thy people may rejoice in thee?
7 Shew us thy mercy, O LORD,
And grant us thy salvation.

8 I will hear what God the LORD will speak:
For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints:

4—7. Yet in spite of forgiveness and restoration, much is still lacking. Oh that God would wholly withdraw His wrath, and gladden His people with a full salvation! Cp. the prayer of cxxvi. 4.

4. *Turn us*] I.e. Restore us. Cp. lxxx. 3. For R.V. marg. *Turn to us*, cp. Is. lxiii. 17; but the rendering of the text is preferable.

cause thine anger &c.] Lit. *break off thine indignation with us:* cease to be provoked with us. The cognate verb is constantly used of Israel's 'provocation' of Jehovah (e.g. Jer. vii. 18 ff.).

5. For the pleading question cp. lxxvii. 7 ff.

wilt thou draw out &c.] I.e. protract, prolong, continue thine anger to one generation after another (lxxvii. 8).

6. *Wilt thou not revive us again*] **Wilt not THOU turn and quicken us?** restoring our national life according to the promises of the prophets. See Hos. vi. 2; Hab. ii. 4; Ezek. xxxvii. 3 ff. Cp. Ps. lxxi. 20; lxxx. 18. THOU is emphatic. THOU Who alone canst, THOU Who art pledged to it by Thy word.

7. *Shew us* &c.] *Cause us to see thy lovingkindness*, upon which we have a claim as Thy beloved ones (*v.* 8).

8—13. The Psalmist listens for Jehovah's answer to His people's prayer; and conveys to them the assurance that rich abundance of blessing is in store for those who fear Him.

8. *I will hear*] Or, *Let me hear*. Cp. lxii. 11; and the striking parallel in Hab. ii. 1, which the LXX makes even closer by its reading, *what the Lord God will speak with me* (lit. *in me*), from which comes the P.B.V., *what the Lord God will say concerning me.*

God the LORD] **The mighty God** (*El*), **Jehovah.**

he will speak &c.] Or, **he speaketh peace.** He will not always be wroth, but will forthwith utter the 'thoughts of peace' which He has all along cherished (Jer. xxix. 11). This reconciliation must result in the welfare of His people. Cp. cxxii. 6 ff.; and for the phrase, Zech. ix. 10.

and to his saints] Or, *even to:* for 'his saints' are synonymous with 'his people.' It is as the objects of His lovingkindness (*v.* 7) not for any merits of their own, that they look for His favour. For the meaning of 'saints' see note on l. 5, and Appendix, Note i.

But let them not turn *again* to folly.
Surely his salvation *is* nigh them that fear him; 9
That glory may dwell in our land.
Mercy and truth are met together; 10
Righteousness and peace have kissed *each other.*
Truth shall spring out of the earth; 11
And righteousness shall look down from heaven.

but let them not turn again *to folly*] The folly of self-confidence (xlix. 13) leading to unbelief and disobedience, which has been the cause of their past misfortunes. Such a note of warning is not out of place, but the reading of the LXX, *and to those who turn their heart to him*, is preferred by some editors.

9. The Psalmist expands the results of that word of peace.

them that fear him] Those who answer to their calling as 'saints.' Cp. ciii. 11, 13, 17.

that glory may dwell in our land] 'Glory' is the manifest Presence of Jehovah, which Ezekiel saw departing from the doomed city (x. 18), but returning to it in the glorious restoration (xliii. 4 ff.). Cp. Is. lx. 1, 2; Zech. ii. 5. 'Dwell' is the word specially used of the abiding of God among His people, from which later Heb. derived the term *Shechinah* for the Presence of God in the Tabernacle and Temple (Ex. xl. 34, 35; 2 Chr. vii. 1—3). Comp. Zech. ii. 10, 11; viii. 3. The promise of the words was to be fulfilled in the Incarnation (John i. 14).

The meaning 'honour' in contrast to the shame and humiliation which are now Israel's portion is inadequate, though this may be included as a result of the return of that greater Glory.

10. Does this verse speak of the *divine attributes* which conspire together in the work of salvation, or of the *human virtues* which will characterise the new community? Primarily of the former. God's lovingkindness and truth—the love which moved Him to enter into covenant with Israel, and the faithfulness which binds Him to be true to His covenant—meet in Israel's redemption. Righteousness and peace greet one another with joyous welcome. Jehovah is a righteous God and therefore a Saviour (Is. xlv. 21). Because salvation is His eternal purpose and He cannot change His purpose, therefore He reconciles His people to Himself. For lovingkindness and truth as attributes of God—often as here almost personified as ministering angels—see Ex. xxxiv. 6; Ps. xxv. 10; xl. 11; lvii. 3, 10; lxi. 7; lxxxvi. 15; lxxxix. 14; cxv. 1; cxxxviii. 2; Mic. vii. 20. For the connexion of 'righteousness' with salvation see on lxv. 5, and note the frequency of this thought in Is. xl. ff.

While however divine attributes are primarily meant, the corresponding human virtues (Prov. iii. 3; Is. xxxii. 16 f.) need not be excluded. The restored community will reflect the attributes of God to which it owes its existence. Cp. Hos. ii. 19, 20; Zech. viii. 8, 16, 19. This thought is more clearly brought out in the next verse.

11. **Truth springeth out of the earth;**
And righteousness hath looked down from heaven. (R.V.)

12 Yea, the LORD shall give *that which is* good;
And our land shall yield her increase.
13 Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set *us* in the way of his steps.

Truth springs up as a natural growth in response to God's manifestation of His saving righteousness. Harmony between earth and heaven is perfected. Cp. Hos. ii. 21 ff.; Is. xlv. 8. Milton must have had this passage in his mind in the *Ode on the Nativity:*

Yea, truth and justice then
Will down return to men,
Orb'd in a rainbow; and, like glories wearing,
Mercy will sit between,
Throned in celestial sheen,
With radiant feet the tissued clouds down steering;
And heaven, as at some festival,
Will open wide the gates of her high palace hall.

12. Material prosperity will go hand in hand with moral progress. Earth responds to the divine blessing. Cp. Lev. xxvi. 4; Deut. xxviii. 12; Ps. lxvii. 6. The fruitfulness of the land is a constant feature in pictures of the Messianic future; and point is given to the promise by the fact that the returned exiles had been suffering from scarcity (Haggai i. 10 f.).

13. Jehovah Himself appears to lead His people forward. Before Him as a herald goes the righteousness which moves Him to the salvation of His people; **and (it) shall make his footsteps a way (to walk in)**; so that His people may follow without let or hindrance; an allusion possibly to the 'way' so often spoken of in the later chapters of Isaiah (xxxv. 8; xlii. 16; xlviii. 17; xlix. 11; li. 10; lvii. 14; lxii. 10). The words are obscure, but this rendering, adopted by R.V., is the best. Other renderings are; (1) *and shall set* its footsteps *in the way of his footsteps*, i.e. follow Him closely, cp. Is. lviii. 8; lii. 12; or, (2) which gives a similar sense, *shall give heed to the way of his footsteps;* or (3) *and shall set its footsteps in the way*, march forward freely and unrestrainedly, in contrast to the gloomy picture of Is. lix. 14; or (4) *shall set his footsteps in the way*, move God to march forth in saving might.

PSALM LXXXVI.

This Psalm is a mosaic of fragments from other Psalms and scriptures[1]. It claims no poetic originality, yet it possesses a pathetic

[1] The references are given in the notes. Pss. xxv, xxvi, xxvii, xl, liv are quoted almost verbatim. Pss. v, vi (?), ix, xvii, xxii, xxviii, xxxi, l (?), lv, lvi, lvii, lxxii, lxxvii, cxvi, cxxx (?) seem to have been laid under contribution, though where the language is general, it is impossible to say that it is derived from one Ps. rather than another. The use of the two groups xxv—xxviii, liv—lvii is noticeable.

Of other books, Ex. xxxiv. 6 is quoted verbatim: and the Psalmist seems to be further indebted to Ex. xv. 11; Deut. iii. 24; xxviii. 58; xxxii. 22; Is. xxiv. 15 (?); xlix. 8, 13; Jer. xxxii. 39.

earnestness and tender grace of its own. It is distinguished by the seven times repeated use of *Adonai*, 'Lord,' in addressing God, a title which expresses the consciousness of specially belonging to God, of standing under His immediate guidance and protection. To this title corresponds the Psalmist's designation of himself as God's servant, and the son of His handmaid (*v.* 16, cp. *vv.* 3, 4). The Psalm furnishes at least one noble phrase which is unique (*v.* 11 *b*), and in *v.* 9 it rises to a height of Messianic hope not surpassed elsewhere. It is the composition of some pious soul whose mind was steeped with the scriptures already in existence, and who recast reminiscences of them into a prayer to suit his own particular needs. Primarily it appears to be an expression of personal devotion, rather than a prayer for the use of the congregation; though sometimes perhaps the Psalmist identifies himself with the community of which he is a member, and speaks of its circumstances and needs as his own (*vv.* 13, 14).

It is the only Psalm in the Third Book which has the name of David prefixed to it. The title *A Prayer of David* can only mean that it is an imitation of the *Prayers of David* (lxxii. 20), and was probably never intended to mean more than this. It cannot have been written till after the Return from the Captivity (to which *v.* 13 may be an allusion), but at what period there is nothing to shew. The author apparently had the Elohistic collection in his hands as revised by its editor (*Introd.* p. xli), for he quotes Ps. liv. 3 in *v.* 14 in the Elohistic form.

One thought leads to another and no definite structural arrangement can be traced in the Psalm. It may perhaps be divided as follows.

i. A series of petitions, each followed by some reason which the Psalmist urges for the hearing of his prayer (1—5).

ii. Renewing his supplication, he finds a ground of confidence in the incomparable nature of God, which suggests the thought of the universal homage which will one day be offered to Him as the only true God (6—10).

iii. Prayers for guidance and vows of thanksgiving lead on to the description of present dangers. Pleading God's revealed character as a God of lovingkindness, he prays for further blessing, and such a clear token of God's favour as may prove to his enemies that he is under God's protection (11—17).

A Prayer of David.

Bow down thine ear, O LORD, hear me: **86**
For I *am* poor and needy.

1—5. A series of petitions, each supported by the ground on which the Psalmist pleads for a hearing.

1. *Bow down* &c.] A common form of invocation. Cp. xvii. 6; xxxi. 2; Is. xxxvii. 17; &c. *hear me*] **Answer me** (lv. 2).

for I am *poor and needy*] Or, **afflicted and needy**: and therefore one of those whom God has specially promised to help (xii. 5). From xl. 17 (=lxx. 5): cp. cix. 22.

2 Preserve my soul; for I *am* holy:
O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee.
3 Be merciful unto me, O Lord:
For I cry unto thee daily.
4 Rejoice the soul of thy servant:
For unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul.
5 For thou, Lord, *art* good, and ready to forgive;
And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.
6 Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer;
And attend to the voice of my supplications.
7 In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee:
For thou wilt answer me.
8 Among the gods *there is* none like unto thee, O Lord;
Neither *are there any works* like unto thy works.
9 All nations whom thou hast made shall come

2. *Preserve my soul*] = xxv. 20.

for I am *holy*] R.V. **godly** fails to bring out the connexion of the word with *chesed*, 'lovingkindness' (*vv.* 5, 13, 15). Cheyne gives *duteous in love.* But the passive sense *beloved*, 'the object of thy lovingkindness,' is far more suitable. He pleads not his own merits, but the covenant relation into which God has brought him as an Israelite. See on l. 5; lxxxv. 8.

3. Be gracious unto me, O Lord;
For unto thee do I cry all the day long.

See lvii. 1, 2, and elsewhere (iii. 4; iv. 1; &c.).

4. *Rejoice* &c.] Cp. xc. 15.

for unto thee &c.] From xxv. 1. God alone is the object of his desires, his aspirations, his prayers. Cp. cxliii. 8; Lam. iii. 41.

5. *ready to forgive*] The exact word is found only here, but for the thought see Ps. cxxx. 4; and for the whole verse cp. Ex. xxxiv. 6 f.

6—10. Renewed supplication for a hearing. The Psalmist is sure of an answer, for Jehovah is the only true God, Whom all nations will one day acknowledge.

6. Taken from lv. 1, 2; v. 2; xxviii. 2; cp. cxxx. 2.

attend] R.V. **hearken.**

7. From lxxvii. 2; xvii. 6.

8. There is none like thee among the gods, O Lord;
And there is nought like thy works.

Based upon Ex. xv. 11, which is frequently imitated elsewhere; and Deut. iii. 24. In *v.* 5 the Psalmist dwelt on God's *willingness* to answer prayer; here he comforts himself with the thought of His *ability.* His is the power possessed by none of those who are called gods and worshipped as such.

9. Apparently a reminiscence of Ps. xxii. 27, combined possibly

And worship before thee, O Lord;
And shall glorify thy name.
For thou *art* great, and doest wondrous *things:* 10
Thou *art* God alone.
Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: 11
Unite my heart to fear thy name.
I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: 12
And I will glorify thy name for evermore.
For great *is* thy mercy toward me: 13
And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.
O God, the proud are risen against me, 14

with Is. xxiv. 15 ('glorify ye...the name of Jehovah') and other passages. But the verse is remarkable for the distinctness and fulness of its Messianic hope, and for the thought implied in the words *whom thou hast made*, that the nations cannot fail ultimately to fulfil the will of their Creator (Rev. iv. 11). It is taken up and expanded in Rev. xv. 3, 4.

10. Cp. lxxvii. 13, 14; lxxii. 18; lxxxiii. 18; and Ex. xv. 11; xxxiv. 10.

11. *Teach me thy way, O LORD*] Word for word from xxvii. 11.

I will walk in thy truth] When Thou dost teach me Thy way. From xxvi. 3.

unite my heart to fear thy name] Let it be no longer divided between Thee and other attractions; let all its powers and affections be concentrated in reverence to Thee as Thou hast revealed Thyself in the works of creation and in acts of redemption. The unity and uniqueness of God demand unity of heart in His worshippers (Deut. vi. 4, 5; x. 12). Such singleheartedness is frequently expressed by the phrases 'a whole heart,' 'a perfect heart,' but the verb *unite* is found here only in this sense. Doubtless it is an allusion to the promise in Jer. xxxii. 39, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever." Cp. too Deut. xxviii. 58.

The LXX and Syr. read the consonants with different vowels (*yichad* for *yachēd*), *let my heart rejoice to fear thy name.*

12, 13. Cp. lvii. 9, 10; ix. 1; l. 15, 23.

with all my heart] R.V. **with my whole heart**; when the prayer of *v.* 11 is granted.

thy mercy] **Thy lovingkindness.**

and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell] **From the nethermost Sheol.** From lvi. 13 (=cxvi. 8); Deut. xxxii. 22. Deliverance from imminent danger of death may be meant; yet here the Psalmist may identify himself with the nation, and refer to its deliverance from the death of the exile. Cp. lxxxv. 6.

14. Again, though the Psalmist may be referring to personal circumstances, it is not impossible that he is alluding to dangers by which the community was threatened. The verse is taken almost word for word from liv. 3, with perhaps a reminiscence of xxii. 16 ('*assembly* of evil

And the assemblies of violent *men* have sought after my soul;
And have not set thee before them.
15 But thou, O Lord, *art* a God full of compassion, and gracious,
Longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.
16 O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me;
Give thy strength unto thy servant,
And save the son of thine handmaid.
17 Shew me a token for good;
That they which hate me may see *it*, and be ashamed:
Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me.

doers'). The variation *proud* for *strangers* may be accidental: the consonants of the two words ZĒDĪM and ZARIM are easily confused, D (ד) and R (ר) being much alike in Hebrew. It should be noted that Ps. liv. is quoted in its 'Elohistic' form, so that apparently the collection had already been made and edited by the Elohistic editor.

assemblies] **Assembly**, or **congregation**.

15. Word for word from Ex. xxxiv. 6. With his proud and merciless enemies he contrasts the revealed character of God, as the ground of the prayer which follows. Though he may have deserved punishment, God cannot surely abandon him to them.

longsuffering] Or, **slow to anger** (R.V.).

16. *O turn* &c.] From xxv. 16.

have mercy upon me] Render, **be gracious unto me**, to shew the connexion with the attribute 'gracious' in *v.* 15.

thy servant...the son of thine handmaid] Cp. cxvi. 16. 'The son of thine handmaid' is a synonym for 'thy servant,' denoting a closer relationship, for servants 'born in the house' (Gen. xiv. 14) were the most trusted dependents. Cp. "of the household of God," Eph. ii. 19. It has been conjectured that the Psalmist, like Samuel, was early dedicated to the service of God; but the words do not necessarily convey this meaning.

17. *a token for good*] Some visible and unmistakable sign of Thy favour towards me. Cp. Jer. xxiv. 6; Ezra viii. 22; Neh. v. 19; xiii. 31.

that they &c.] **That they which hate me may be ashamed when they see that thou** &c. Cp. xl. 3; vi. 10; xxxv. 4: and for *holpen... comforted*, Is. xlix. 8, 13.

PSALM LXXXVII.

This Psalm is fittingly placed here, for it expands the thought of lxxxvi. 9 in the style and the spirit of prophecy. It is terse, abrupt, enigmatic, like a prophetic oracle; in its breadth of view and fulness of Messianic hope it vies with the grandest of prophetic utterances. It

depicts Zion as the metropolis of the universal kingdom of God, into which all nations are adopted as citizens. The franchise of Zion is conferred upon them as though it were theirs by right of birth. It stands alone in the peculiar form in which the idea is embodied, though many prophecies lead up to it. See especially Is. ii. 2—4 (= Mic. iv. 1—3); Is. xi. 10; xviii. 7; xix. 19 ff.; xliv. 5; lx. 1 ff.; Zeph. ii. 11; iii. 9, 10; Zech. ii. 11; viii. 20—23. Like Isaiah (xix. 24 f.) the poet sees the most inveterate foes of the kingdom of God acknowledging His sovereignty; he sees nations the most bitterly antagonistic to Israel, the most diametrically opposed in character to the true spirit of Israel, the most remote from the influence of Israel, brought into harmony with Israel, and adopted into its commonwealth.

Thus the Psalm is a prediction of the incorporation of all nations into the Church of Christ, and the establishment of the new and universal nationality of the kingdom of God. It is a prophecy in O.T. language of "the Jerusalem that is above, which is our mother" (Gal. iv. 26). It looks forward to the time when the Gentiles shall no longer be "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" but "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. ii. 12, 19). We must not indeed read the full Christian idea of the new birth into the words "This one was born there," for primarily they refer to nations not to individuals; yet we may see in them a foreshadowing of the truth that a new birth is requisite for entrance into the kingdom of God (John iii. 3 ff.).

The Psalm has been assigned, with considerable plausibility, to the age of Hezekiah. (1) The same loving enthusiasm for Zion, and the same hopes of the conversion of the nations, meet us in the Psalms and prophecies of that period. See especially Pss. xlvi, xlvii, xlviii, lxxvi; Is. xix. 24 f. (2) 'Rahab' is Isaiah's name for Egypt (xxx. 7, R.V.), which was a leading power at the time; Babylon was brought into contact with Judah (Is. xxxix); the Philistines had been subjugated by Hezekiah (2 Kings xviii. 8); the Ethiopians were coming into notice (Is. xviii; xxxvii. 9); and after the retreat of Sennacherib many nations sent congratulatory embassies to Hezekiah with gifts for the Temple (2 Chron. xxxii. 23).

On the other hand the parallels of thought and language with the later part of the book of Isaiah (especially xliv. 5; lx. 1 ff.) and Zechariah, are not less striking; and the mention of Babylon rather than Assyria points to a date after that power had taken the place of Assyria as the mistress of Western Asia. Egypt, the ancient enemy, and Babylon, the recent oppressor, are named as the typical foes of God's people. It seems best then to suppose that the Psalm was written (like Ps. lxxxv) after the Return from Babylon, to cheer the drooping spirits of those returned exiles who were in danger of being utterly disheartened by the disappointing contrast between the weakness and insignificance of their little community, and the grandeur and magnificence of the prophetic promises of the future glory and greatness of Zion. In poetic language and with prophetic authority it reasserts the fundamental truths of Jehovâh's choice of Zion, and of Zion's destiny in relation to the nations. Never had such encouragement been more needed; never was such a faith more clearly the fruit of divine inspiration.

The Psalm consists of two stanzas with a concluding verse.

i. Zion is the city of God, founded and beloved by Him, the heir of glorious promises (1—3).

ii. God proclaims that it is His will to reconcile her ancient enemies to Himself and incorporate them as her citizens. Zion shall be the mother-city of the nations of the world (4—6).

iii. A picture of the rejoicing of those who find in her the source of every joy (7).

A Psalm *or* Song for the sons of Korah.

87 His foundation *is* in the holy mountains.
2 The LORD loveth the gates of Zion
More than all the dwellings of Jacob.

1—3. The glory of Zion the city of God.

1. The Psalmist's heart is full of his theme. He states it abruptly in a verse of a single line (cp. xviii. 1):

'Tis his foundation upon the holy mountains:

which stands by itself as a kind of title to his poem or inscription on his picture. Zion is a city founded by God Himself (Is. xiv. 32). Its site is consecrated (ii. 6; xliii. 3; xlviii. 1, and often) by the ownership and presence of Jehovah.

The plural *mountains* (cp. cxxxiii. 3) may be merely poetical, or it may refer to the different hills upon which Jerusalem stood, or generally to the mountainous region in which it was situated. "Jerusalem was on the ridge, the broadest and most strongly marked ridge of the backbone of the complicated hills, which extend through the whole country from the Desert to the plain of Esdraelon." Like Rome and Constantinople, it stood upon a "multiplicity of eminences," and "the peculiarity imparted to its general aspect and to its history by these various heights is incontestable." Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 176, 177. Comp. note on xlviii. 2.

The brevity and abruptness of the verse have led some commentators to conjecture that the first line has been lost, and others to combine *vv.* 1, 2 in construction (cp. R.V. marg.) thus:

His foundation upon the holy mountains doth Jehovah love,
Yea, the gates of Zion &c.

The conjecture is unnecessary, and though the combination of *vv.* 1, 2 would give a good parallelism, the Ancient Versions support the division of the Massoretic Text, and the abrupt beginning is in accordance with the terse oracular style of the Psalm.

P.B.V. '*her* foundation' is untenable. The gender of the pronoun in the Heb. shews that it cannot refer to the city.

2. *the gates of Zion*] A poetical expression for the city, specially appropriate with reference to the thought of the crowd of pilgrims (cxxii. 2) entering it from all nations (Is. lx. 11; Rev. xxii. 14).

more than all the dwellings of Jacob] Better than any of the other cities of Israel, though they too are goodly (Num. xxiv. 5, where the same word is rendered 'tabernacles').

Glorious *things* are spoken of thee, 3
O city of God. Selah.

I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that 4
know me:
Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia;
This *man* was born there.
And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in 5
her:

3. *Glorious* things *are spoken of thee*] This need not be limited to the utterance of *vv.* 4 ff., but may include the great prophetic promises generally, such as Is. ii. 2 ff., xi. 10, xix. 20 ff.; and, if the Psalm is post-exilic, lx. 1 ff. *O city of God*] Of His choice, His love, His care. Cp. xlvi. 4; xlviii. 1, 2, 8.

4—6. The nations of the world shall be enrolled as Zion's children; and Zion shall be glorified by this accession of unnumbered fresh citizens.

4. God Himself is the speaker (cp. lx. 6 ff.). **I will make mention of**, solemnly and publicly acknowledge, **Rahab and Babylon, as among them that know me**, that own Me as their God and worship Me. Cp. xxxvi. 10; ix. 10; v. 11; Is. xix. 21. *Rahab*[1] is a nickname for Egypt (Is. xxx. 7; li. 9; Ps. lxxxix. 10). It may have been the name of some mythological sea-monster (Job xxvi. 12, ix. 13, R.V.) chosen as an emblem of Egypt (cp. Is. li. 9), or it may simply mean 'Arrogance.' Its use here is significant: the ferocious monster is tamed; the blustering antagonist is reconciled.

Behold &c.] God points as it were to each of these nations in succession and says, **This one was born there**, namely in Zion. By this divine edict each of them is invested with the full rights and privileges of citizenship as though they had been born in Zion.

It is God's purpose to reconcile all nations to Himself. Egypt, the world-power of the South, the ancient and hereditary enemy of God's people; Babylon, the world-power of the North, the cruel oppressor of later times; warlike Philistia, by which Israel had so often been harassed; proud Tyre, the haughty representative of commerce and wealth; distant Ethiopia, famous for its stalwart warriors (Is. xviii. 7); —all will be brought to recognise Jehovah as their God; all shall be incorporated into the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. ii. 12). The thought is the same as that of Is. xix. 24, 25, though it is expressed in different language.

5. The Psalmist speaks, echoing the divine decree from Zion's point of view, dwelling upon the honour which will accrue to Zion by this accession of citizens.

[1] It may be noted that this name is differently spelt in Hebrew from *Rahab* in Josh. ii. 1 ff., and is derived from a different root. This is *Rāhāb*, that *Rāchāb*.

And the Highest himself shall establish her.

6 The LORD shall count, when he writeth *up* the people,
That this *man* was born there. Selah.

7 As well the singers as the players on instruments *shall be there:*
All my springs *are* in thee.

Yea, of Zion it shall be said,
Each and every one was born in her;
And the Most High himself shall establish her.

Not merely certain specified nations but all the nations shall call Zion their mother-city. One after another comes to be reckoned among her children[1]. Grammatically it is possible to understand *each and every one* of individuals, but the context is decisive in favour of taking this verse to refer to nations, as *vv.* 4 and 6 do. Each nation, reckoned as a whole, receives the right of citizenship. Individuals receive it as members of their nation.

The LXX and some other Ancient Versions render *hath founded her;* but *shall establish her,* as xlviii. 8, is certainly right. Under the protection and blessing of the Sovereign Ruler of the world she grows ever stronger and nobler as each fresh nation joins the universal kingdom of God.

6. Jehovah shall reckon, when he registers the peoples,
'This one was born there.'

Jehovah holds His census of the nations, and writes their names down in His book. One after another of them He registers as 'born in Zion.' It is the official confirmation of their rights of citizenship. Allusions to the registers of citizens are found in lxix. 28; Is. iv. 3; Ezek. xiii. 9; and the importance attached to genealogical registers appears in Ezra ii. 62.

7. Conclusion. The Psalm ends as abruptly as it began, with a verse which is enigmatic in its brevity. It is best explained as an outline picture of the universal rejoicing with which the citizens of Zion greet their mother.

And singing as well as dancing (shall they chant),
'All my fountains are in thee.'

The rendering *dancing* is preferable to *playing on the flute* (cp. A.V., R.V. marg.). For dancing as an expression of religious rejoicing see xxx. 11; cxlix. 3; cl. 4; Ex. xv. 20; 2 Sam. vi. 16.

The second line is their anthem. It may even be a fragment of some well-known hymn. *My fountains* is to be understood metaphorically, as 'fountains of salvation' in Is. xii. 3. Cp. Ps. xxxvi. 9 f.; lxxxiv. 6; Ezek. xlvii. 1; Joel iii. 18; Zech. xiv. 8. It is possible, but less satisfactory, to take the verse as the Psalmist's apostrophe to Zion:

Both they that sing and they that dance,
All my fountains are in thee:

[1] The reading of the LXX, though due apparently simply to a textual error in the Greek (μήτηρ for μήτι, Vulg. *numquid*), catches the spirit of the Psalm too strikingly to be passed over: *O Mother Sion, shall a man say.*

"meaning that every source of pleasure, music, singing, &c. was to be found in Zion" (Bp Perowne). So Milton in his paraphrase:

> Both they who sing and they who dance
> With sacred songs are there;
> In thee fresh brooks and soft streams glance,
> And all my fountains clear.

The obscurity of the verse must however be acknowledged. Cheyne thinks that it may be "a fragment of a description of a joyous procession." Cp. lxviii. 25. Is it possible that it is not, strictly speaking, part of the Psalm, but a liturgical direction to sing the anthem "All my fountains are in thee" at the end of the Psalm, as an expression of the joy of Zion's citizens?

PSALM LXXXVIII.

This is the saddest Psalm in the whole Psalter. It is a pathetic cry of hopeless despair in the midst of unrelieved suffering. In other Psalms the light breaks through the clouds at last: here the gloom is deepest at the close. It is characteristic that the last word is *darkness*.

Is the Psalmist describing his own personal experience, or does he speak in the name of the nation? There is much to be said for the view that the speaker is Israel in exile, "lamenting its exclusion from the light of its Lord's Presence." Possibly, as may be the case in Lam. iii, the community identifies itself with the typical sufferer Job, and borrows his language to describe its sufferings. So the Psalm is interpreted in the Targum, which paraphrases *v.* 7, "Thou hast placed me in exile which is like the nether pit"; and in the Syriac Version, which prefixes the title, "Concerning the people which was in Babylon."

But while the Psalm was doubtless so *applied* in liturgical use, there is nothing in it which demands the national interpretation, and much which it is most natural to regard as primarily personal; and it seems best to regard it as springing out of the personal experience of some heavily afflicted saint. He had been, it would seem, a victim of the painful and loathsome disease of leprosy from his childhood. Life had been for him a living death. He stood on the brink of the grave: nay, though still alive on earth, he seemed to have been plunged into the darkness of Sheol. Banished from society, he could have no part in the joys of life; excluded from the Temple, he could have no share in the worship which was the outward and visible sign of God's covenant with His people. The wrath of God seemed to be resting upon him. Nor could he look forward to a life through death in which his soul "delivered from the burden of the flesh" would be "in joy and felicity." Death, as it then seemed, must sever the covenant relation between God and His people. Sheol was the land of oblivion, where neither He remembered them, nor they remembered Him. Still less could he console himself with the hope of a joyful resurrection.

Such a Psalm brings home to us, as no other does, a sense of the shadow which rested upon the life of ancient Israel, and of the preciousness of the revelation of eternal life in Jesus Christ (Heb. ii. 14, 15). It

is moreover a noble example of a faith which trusts God utterly in spite of all discouragement, and cleaves to God most passionately when God seems to have withdrawn Himself most completely.

The Psalm presents many parallels with similar Psalms, with the Book of Lamentations, and with the Book of Job, with which the author must have been familiar, and from which he borrows language for the portraiture of his own sufferings. Who he was, it is idle to speculate. Uzziah in his leprosy, Hezekiah in his sickness, Jeremiah in his dungeon, have been suggested. Ingenious, but improbable, is the conjecture of Delitzsch, that Heman the Ezrahite, in conjunction with other sages of Solomon's time, was the author of the Book of Job, and that in this Psalm he records his personal experiences, which are there expanded in a dramatic form.

The Psalm may be analysed as follows:

i. After an introductory invocation the Psalmist pleads the intensity of his sufferings, if so be he may move God to pity. He is at the point of death; nay already counted as a dead man; deserted by his friends; plunged as it were into the very depths of Sheol by the visitation of God's wrath (1—8).

ii. He has no hope in life. Yet he has continued instant in prayer. Can God display His power and love in the unseen world? Nay, that is incredible (9—12).

iii. Still he casts himself upon God. Why does God reject him, and drive him to distraction by the terrors of His wrath, hemming him in and isolating him so that no ray of sympathy relieves the misery of his life (13—18)?

The Psalm is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday, doubtless because the Ancient Fathers interpreted it, like Ps. xxii, as the utterance of the suffering Christ.

The title is composite. The first half, **A song, a Psalm of the sons of Korah**, unless it is a mere accidental repetition of the title of Ps. lxxxvii, indicates that it was taken from the Korahite collection. The second half, **For the Chief Musician; set to Mahalath Leannoth. Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite,** gives the musical setting and traditional authorship. *Leannoth* may mean 'for singing antiphonally'; but more probably *Mahalath Leannoth*, i.e. 'sickness to afflict' is the title of the melody to which the Psalm was to be sung, which may or may not have been identical with that called *Mahalath* in the title of Ps. liii. On *Maschil* see *Introd.* p. xviii.

The designation of Heman and Ethan as Ezrahites in the titles of this and the following Psalm is perplexing.

(i) In 1 Kings iv. 31, Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol, and Darda are named as famous sages, whose wisdom was surpassed by that of Solomon. In 1 Chron. ii. 6, we have the same four names (for *Dara* is an obvious error of transcription for *Darda*) given as sons or descendants of Zerah. It is natural to infer that the patronymic *Ezrahite* means, as it may legitimately do, 'of the family of Zerah.' Heman and Ethan consequently belonged to the tribe of Judah. It is not stated whether the four sages of 1 Kings iv. 31 were contemporary with Solomon or not. The comparison would be more forcible if they

were the most famous sages of all past time known to the historian. But on the other hand it need not be supposed that they were literally sons of Zerah, for 'sons' in genealogical language frequently means 'descendants,' and in 1 Kings they (or at least the last three of them) are called 'the sons of Mahol.'

(ii) In 1 Chron. xv. 17, 19 Heman and Ethan appear along with Asaph as leaders of the Temple music. Heman, who was a Korahite, represented the family of Kohath; Asaph that of Gershom; Ethan that of Merari. In 1 Chron. xxv. 5 Heman is called "the king's seer," and from a comparison of 1 Chron. xvi. 41, 42; xxv. 1 ff. with xv. 17, 19 it has been inferred that Ethan was also called Jeduthun.

It is certainly natural to suppose that the famous musicians are meant here, and that these Psalms were traditionally ascribed to them, or were in some way connected with the guilds or choirs which bore their names, as the Psalms of Asaph were connected with the guild or choir of Asaph. Accordingly various attempts have been made to explain how Levites could also be called Ezrahites. It has been conjectured that they were Judahites who had been adopted into the Levitical guild, or Levites, who as dwelling in the territory assigned to the family of Zerah were reckoned to belong to that family (cp. Judg. xvii. 7). But these conjectures are precarious, and it seems most probable that Heman and Ethan the musicians have been wrongly identified with their namesakes the famous sages.

A Song *or* Psalm for the sons of Korah. To the chief Musician upon Mahalath Leannoth, Maschil of Heman the Ezrahite.

O LORD God of my salvation, 88
I have cried day *and* night before thee:
Let my prayer come before thee: 2

1—8. The Psalmist appeals for a hearing, supporting his appeal by a pathetic description of the chastisements by which God has brought him to the very edge of the grave.

1. *O LORD God* &c.] **Jehovah, the God of my salvation.** Cp. xxvii. 9.

I have cried day and *night before thee*] Parallels such as xxii. 2 suggest that this is the meaning intended, but it is difficult to extract it from the Heb. text, even if we assume that "the broken language corresponds to the weakness of the gasping sufferer" (Kay). An ingenious and plausible emendation removes the difficulty thus:

Jehovah my God, I have cried for help in the day time,
And in the night hath my crying been before thee.

Cp. *v.* 13; xxx. 2; Job xix. 7; Ps. xlii. 8. Though God has forsaken him, he can still address Him as *my God* (xxii. 1). Like Job, he must appeal to God even when God seems wholly alienated from him.

2. *come before thee*] **Enter into thy presence** (R.V. from P.B.V.). Cp. xviii. 6; lxxix. 11.

Incline thine ear unto my cry;
3 For my soul is full of troubles:
And my life draweth nigh unto the grave.
4 I am counted with them that go down into the pit:
I am as a man *that hath* no strength:
5 Free among the dead,
Like the slain that lie in the grave,
Whom thou rememberest no more:
And they are cut off from thy hand.
6 Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit,

my prayer...my cry] Cp. xvii. 1; lxi. 1. The word for 'cry' denotes a shrill piercing cry, frequently of joy, but sometimes, as here, of supplication, "expressive of emotional excitement such as an Eastern scruples not to use in prayer" (Cheyne).

3. *For* &c.] He pleads the urgency of his need as the ground for a hearing.

draweth nigh &c.] **Hath drawn nigh unto Sheol**, the gloomy nether world which is the abode of the departed. Cp. vi. 5; cvii. 18.

4. He is regarded as a dying man. *The pit* is the grave or Sheol. Cp. xxviii. 1; cxliii. 7; xxii. 29; Prov. i. 12.

that hath *no strength*] Like the feeble shadows of the dead. Or as R.V., **that hath no help**: cp. the cognate word in xxii. 19, rendered in R.V., *O thou my succour*.

5. *Free among the dead*] There can hardly be any allusion to Job iii. 19, where the word is used of a welcome release from servitude, for it is a far-fetched interpretation to suppose that a new turn is given to the phrase and that it here means 'dismissed against his will from the service of God.' Render as R.V., **cast off**, or R.V. marg., **cast away**. A cognate word is used for 'the house of *separation*' in which Uzziah lived as a leper (2 Chron. xxvi. 21).

Another but doubtful translation is, *My couch is among the dead:* cp. Job xvii. 13.

the slain &c.] The slain in battle, whose corpses are flung into a nameless common grave. Cp. Ezek. xxxii. 24 ff.

whom thou rememberest no more] Sheol is the 'land of oblivion,' where men neither remember God (vi. 5; xxx. 9) nor are remembered by Him. *They are cut off from thy hand*, severed from Thy gracious help and protection. Cp. xxxi. 22; Lam. iii. 54; 2 Chron. xxvi. 21. On this gloomy view of the future state see *Introd.* pp. lxxv ff.

6. *Thou hast laid me*] God is treating him as though he were actually dead. The same word is used in the same connexion in xlix. 14.

in the lowest pit] The nether world in the depths of the earth. Cp. lxxxvi. 13; lxiii. 9; Lam. iii. 55. The Targum explains it allegorically of the Exile. "Thou hast placed me in exile which is like the nether pit." *in darkness*] R.V. **in dark places**. So Sheol is described in cxliii. 3; Lam. iii. 6. Cp. Job x. 21, 22.

In darkness, in the deeps.
Thy wrath lieth hard upon me,
And thou hast afflicted *me with* all thy waves. Selah. 7
Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me; 8
Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:
I am shut up, and I cannot come forth.
Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction: 9
LORD, I have called daily upon thee,
I have stretched out my hands unto thee.

in the deeps] A word generally used of the depths of the sea: here metaphorically of the depths of misery (lxix. 15; cp. Lam. iii. 54), or as another synonym for Sheol, which was supposed to be situated below the sea. Cp. lxxi. 20; Job xxvi. 5.

The LXX and Syr. however read 'shadow of death' or 'deep gloom' (xliv. 19, note). This reading only implies a transposition of the consonants in the Heb. text, and is supported by the parallel passage in Job x. 21, 22, which seems to be in the Psalmist's mind.

7. *Thy wrath* &c.] Cp. xxxii. 4; xxxviii. 2.

thou hast afflicted me with *all thy waves*] Cp. xlii. 7 for the metaphor.

8. Like Job he is deserted even by his **familiar friends** (not merely *acquaintance*, as A.V.), and this is due to the act of God, Who has smitten him with a sickness which makes them loathe even the sight of him. Cp. xxxi. 11; Job xix. 13 ff., 19. He seems to describe himself as a leper like Job. Leprosy was a living death (Num. xii. 12): more than any other disease it was regarded as the direct 'stroke' of God (Job xix. 21). The leper was cut off from all society and even from taking part in the public worship of God, and was compelled to live alone (Lev. xiii. 46; 2 Chr. xxvi. 21). The reference is of course not to the temporary seclusion for the purpose of ascertaining whether a man was really a leper (Lev. xiii. 4 ff.), but to the permanent separation from society, in which the leper was virtually a prisoner, not daring to expose himself to the public gaze (Job xxxi. 34).

Possibly however the last line of the verse is not literal but metaphorical, describing the hopelessness of his condition as a prisoner who cannot escape. Cp. Job iii. 23; xiii. 27; xix. 8; Lam. iii. 7.

St Luke seems to allude to this verse in his narrative of the Crucifixion, ch. xxiii. 49.

9—12. Again (cp. *v.* 1) he pleads the constancy of his prayers. His strength is failing. He will soon be dead; and in the grave he will be beyond the reach of God's love and faithfulness. Cp. Job x. 20 ff.; xvii. 11 ff.

9. *Mine eye mourneth*] R.V. **wasteth away.** The sunken, lack-lustre eye is the sure sign of suffering. Cp. vi. 7; xxxi. 9; Job xvii. 7.

stretched out] R.V. **spread forth**, in the attitude of prayer. Cp. (though the word is different) xliv. 20; cxliii. 6; Is. i. 15.

10 Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?
Shall the dead arise *and* praise thee? Selah.
11 Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?
Or thy faithfulness in destruction?
12 Shall thy wonders be known in the dark?
And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?
13 But unto thee have I cried, O LORD;
And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee.

10. This and the two following verses can hardly be, as some commentators suppose, the prayer to which he refers in *v.* 9. The connexion of thought seems to be this. He has prayed that God will shew him His marvellous lovingkindness, but he will soon be beyond the reach of it, for of course from his point of view there can be but one answer to the questions of *vv.* 10—12, and that a negative one. In despair he asks;

Wilt thou do wonders for the dead?
Shall the shades arise and praise thee?

To do 'wonders' is the prerogative of God (Ex. xv. 11; Ps. lxxvii. 11, 14): to give thanks to Him for them is the duty of man: but the Psalmist cannot believe that even God will work such a miracle that the dead shall arise and praise Him. *Rephāīm*, the Heb. word for 'shades,' denotes the dead as weak and nerveless ghosts. *Arise* might mean no more than 'stand up,' referring to what takes place in the unseen world, but the parallel of Is. xxvi. 14 suggests that it is a resurrection of which the poet speaks as inconceivable. Cp. Job xiv. 12.

11. To proclaim God's lovingkindness and faithfulness is the delight of His people (xl. 10; xcii. 2), but in the grave they will neither have cause nor power to do it. These two attributes, so often coupled together, are the keynote of Ps. lxxxix.

'Destruction,' Heb. *Abaddon*, is almost a proper name for Sheol as the place of ruin: elsewhere only in the 'Wisdom literature,' Job xxvi. 6; xxviii. 22; xxxi. 12; Prov. xv. 11; xxvii. 20. Cp. Rev. ix. 11, where it is the name of "the angel of the abyss," Gk. *Apollyon*, 'the Destroyer.'

12. Nay, God's wonders will not even be known in Darkness, nor His righteousness, His faithfulness to His covenant (lxxi. 2, and often), in the land of Oblivion: where men neither remember God (vi. 5) nor are remembered by Him (*v.* 5); where thought feeling and action are at an end. See Eccl. ix. 5, 6, 10; and even in Ecclesiasticus xvii. 27, 28, Baruch ii. 17, we hear the echo of Is. xxxviii. 18 f.

13—18. Death brings no hope. Will not God then listen to his prayer and grant him some relief in his extremity of suffering and solitude?

13. But as for me, unto thee, Jehovah, have I cried for help,
And in the morning shall my prayer come before thee.

He contrasts himself with the dead, whose covenant relation with

LORD, why castest thou off my soul? 14
Why hidest thou thy face from me?
I *am* afflicted and ready to die from *my* youth *up:* 15
While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted.
Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; 16
Thy terrors have cut me off.
They came round about me daily like water; 17
They compassed me about together.
Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, 18
And mine acquaintance *into* darkness.

God is at an end. He at least can still pray, and in spite of all discouragement will not cease to pray.

Prevent = 'go to meet,' as in lix. 10; lxxix. 8. The first thought of each day shall be prayer. Cp. v. 3; lv. 17.

14. Questions of surprise and expostulation. Cp. lxxiv. 1; lxxvii. 7. For the second line cp. Job xiii. 24; Ps. xiii. 1. God "shuts out his prayer," Lam. iii. 8.

15. Will God have no pity upon one whose whole life has been spent at the point of death? Could this be said of Israel as a nation? 'From youth' is of course frequently used of the nation (cxxix. 1, 2; Jer. xxxii. 30; &c.), but Israel's existence had not been continuously wretched and precarious.

while *I suffer* &c.] **I have borne thy terrors (till) I am distracted.** *Terrors* is a favourite word with Job. The word rendered *distracted* occurs here only and is of doubtful meaning. Possibly it is a false reading for another word meaning *faint* or *stupefied* (xxxviii. 8).

16. The fiery streams of thy wrath have gone over me.
Cp. xlii. 7; but for *waves* he substitutes *fiery wraths.*

Thine alarms, a word found only in Job vi. 4, **have made an end of me** (Lam. iii. 53).

17. They have surrounded me like water all the day long;
They have encompassed me about together.

The figure of *v.* 16 is continued. The flood of calamity threatens to engulf him, and there is none (*v.* 18) to stretch out a helping hand to the drowning man.

18. Cp. *v.* 8; xxxviii. 11; Job xix. 13.

and *mine acquaintance* into *darkness*] A difficult phrase. Another possible rendering is, **my familiar friends are darkness**: darkness takes the place of friends: cp. Job xvii. 14.

We take leave of this sad singer with his riddle unsolved, with no ray of light piercing the gloom; yet believing in the fact of God's love though he can only see the signs of His wrath, appealing, like Job, to God, though God seems utterly hostile to him; assured that if he has any hope at all, it is in God alone. His faith has met its reward.

PSALM LXXXIX.

This Psalm presents, with singular force and pathos, the dilemma which must have perplexed many a pious soul in the Exile. On the one hand, the assured lovingkindness and faithfulness of God and His explicit promise of an eternal dominion to the house of David; on the other hand, the sight of the representative of that house a discrowned exile, and his kingdom plundered and desolate. How could the contradiction be reconciled?

The Psalm consists of an introduction, followed by three main divisions. Its argument may be traced as follows.

i. The Psalmist's purpose is to celebrate the lovingkindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, which he is persuaded are eternal and unlimited. They have been manifested in the covenant with David, and the solemn proclamation of that covenant is given as from the mouth of God Himself (1—4).

ii. After this introduction, marked off as such by a musical interlude, the Psalmist proceeds to celebrate the praise of Jehovah, dwelling especially upon the power and faithfulness which are the double guarantee for the performance of His promises. Heaven and the angels praise Him, for they know that there is none like Him (5—7); He manifests His sovereignty in nature and in history as the Creator and Ruler of the world, and His moral attributes of righteousness and judgement, lovingkindness and truth, are the climax of His glory (8—14). Happy the people who have such a God, and whose king is the special object of His choice and care (15—18).

iii. The mention of the king forms the transition to the next division, which is a poetical expansion of the promise to David recorded in 2 Sam. vii. On that memorable occasion Jehovah had solemnly covenanted to strengthen and support the king of His choice, to give him victory over all his enemies, to extend his dominion to the boundaries foretold of old, to adopt him as His firstborn and make him supreme over the kings of the earth, to give eternal dominion to his seed after him. Though the sins of his descendants might demand punishment, the divine covenant that his seed and his throne should endure for ever, would be sacred and inviolable (19—37).

iv. Having thus confronted God with His own promises, the Psalmist proceeds to confront Him with the actual state of things which is in glaring contradiction to those promises. He has abandoned king and people to defeat, disgrace, ruin (38—45). Remonstrance is followed by earnest pleading. Life is short. If relief come not soon, the Psalmist cannot live to see the proof of God's faithfulness, and meanwhile he and all God's servants are forced to endure the contemptuous insults of their heathen conquerors (46—51).

Thus the motive of the Psalm is the contradiction between God's character and promises on the one hand, and the fate of the king and people of Israel on the other hand. The keywords of the Psalm are *loving-*

kindness and *faithfulness*, each of which occurs seven times (*vv.* 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49). Cp. also *faithful* (28, 37), *I will not be false* (33), *I will not lie* (35), *covenant* (3, 28, 34, 39), *oath* (3, 35, 49). Love moved Jehovah to enter into the covenant with the house of David: faithfulness binds Him to keep it. The enthusiastic praises of Jehovah's majesty (*vv.* 5 ff.), and the detailed recital of the splendour and solemnity of the promise (*vv.* 19 ff.), serve to heighten the contrast of the king's present degradation, while at the same time they are a plea and a consolation. Can such a God, is the Psalmist's argument, fail to make good so solemn a promise? How the contradiction is to be solved is left entirely to God. Hope does not yet take the shape of prayer for the advent of the Messianic king.

The Psalm was probably written during the Exile. It can hardly be earlier than the destruction of Jerusalem and the downfall of the Davidic kingdom, and on the other hand there is nothing to indicate that it is later than the Return from Babylon. *Vv.* 38 ff. receive their most natural interpretation if it was written while Jehoiachin was still a dishonoured captive in Babylon, i.e. before B.C. 561. For they seem to speak of an individual who is the representative of David and bears the title of Jehovah's anointed, and yet is actually dethroned and dishonoured; and the feeling of bitter disappointment which they breathe was more natural when the fall of the kingdom was comparatively recent, than it would have been after the Return, when at least the dawn of hope had begun, and a step had been taken towards the solution of the problem which perplexed the Psalmist. *V.* 14 *a* is borrowed in *v.* 2 of the Restoration hymn, Ps. xcvii.

The theory that the Psalm was written after the conquest of Judah by Shishak in the reign of Rehoboam (1 Kings xiv. 25 ff.; 2 Chron. xii. 2 ff.) is wholly improbable. The language of *vv.* 38 ff. must refer to something more than a temporary disaster, however serious: moreover use is certainly made of Ps. lxxx. 12 in *vv.* 40, 41, and possibly of Pss. lxxiv, lxxix in *vv.* 41, 46, 50, 51, Psalms which cannot well be earlier than the Fall of Jerusalem.

The exilic date is supported by the parallels in Jer. xxxiii. 21, 22, 26, and Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24; xxxvii. 24, 25, the only passages in prophecy where the phrase 'David my servant' is used (except Is. xxxvii. 35=2 Kings xix. 34). Cp. too Ezek. xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 6, 15 with *vv.* 50, 51; the conjunction of 'lovingkindness' and 'faithfulness' in Lam. iii. 22, 23; and the lament over the capture of 'Jehovah's anointed' in Lam. iv. 20.

The choice of this Psalm as a Proper Psalm for Christmas Day is doubtless due to its containing the recital of the great Messianic promise to David. But the whole Psalm, and not merely that part of it, is appropriate, for the Incarnation was the true solution of the Psalmist's perplexity, as the supreme demonstration of the lovingkindness and faithfulness of God in the fulfilment of His promises. Cp. Luke i. 32 f.

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite.

89 I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever:
With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations.
2 For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever:
Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.
3 I have made a covenant with my chosen,
I have sworn unto David my servant,
4 Thy seed will I stablish for ever,
And build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

On *Ethan the Ezrahite* see Intr. to Ps. lxxxviii.

1—4. The Psalmist states his theme: the lovingkindness and faithfulness of Jehovah, which he is persuaded can never fail; and the promise of eternal dominion to the house of David.

1. God's lovingkindnesses and faithfulness are an unfailing theme for grateful song. The past lovingkindnesses of God are unalterable facts; His faithfulness to His promises is beyond question: thus in these opening verses the poet's faith rises triumphantly over the circumstances in which he is situated.

the mercies] Better, **the lovingkindnesses**, and so throughout the Psalm. 'Lovingkindness' and 'faithfulness' are its key-words, each occurring seven times. Cp. Is. lv. 3, "the sure" (or "faithful") "lovingkindnesses shewn to David."

with my mouth] Aloud and openly.

2. *For I have said*] 'I have deliberately come to this conclusion.' Thus emphatically the poet introduces the motive for his song. He is persuaded that one stone after another will continue to be laid in the building of God's lovingkindness till it reaches to heaven itself, even though it may now seem to be a deserted ruin. Though for rhythmical reasons the verse is divided into two lines, its sense must be taken as a whole: 'Lovingkindness and faithfulness shall be built up and established for ever in the heavens.'

For the metaphorical use of 'build' cp. Job xxii. 23; Jer. xii. 16; Mal. iii. 15. The choice of the word, as well as of 'establish' in the next line, is suggested by their use in *v.* 4.

in the very heavens] High as the heavens (xxxvi. 5); or in the region where it is beyond the reach of earthly vicissitudes (cxix. 89, 90).

Many editors would read, *Thou hast said...My faithfulness shall be established* &c., a change partly supported by the LXX and Jer. But the structure of the Psalm is against the change, for the verses run in pairs, and *v.* 2 is clearly to be connected with *v.* 1: moreover the emphatic 'I have said' is by no means superfluous.

3, 4. These verses contain the sum of the promise to David and his seed (2 Sam. vii. 5 ff.) which is expanded in *vv.* 19 ff. It is in relation to this promise in particular that the poet intends to sing of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness. Almost every word is taken from the narra-

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O LORD: 5
Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.
For who in the heaven can be compared unto the LORD? 6
Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the LORD?
God *is* greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, 7

tive of 2 Sam. vii. For 'David my servant' see *vv.* 5, 8, 26, and cp. *vv.* 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 28, 29: for 'establish' see *vv.* 12, 13, 16, 26: for 'for ever' see *vv.* 13, 16, 24, 26, 29: for 'seed' and 'throne' see *vv.* 12, 13, 16: for 'build' see *v.* 27. 'Chosen' represents *v.* 8 (cp. Ps. lxxviii. 70 f.). 'Covenant' however does not belong to the phraseology of 2 Sam. vii (but see 2 Sam. xxiii. 5); nor is the promise spoken of there as confirmed by an oath.

The introduction of God as the speaker without any prefatory 'Thou hast said' is surprisingly abrupt. It is possible that the word has dropped out. But Hebrew leaves much to be understood, and misunderstanding is here impossible.

5—18. The adoring recital of God's attributes which follows here has a twofold purpose in relation to the subject of the Psalm. It is a plea with God, and it is an encouragement to Israel. His omnipotence guarantees His ability, His faithfulness is the pledge of His will, to perform His promises to David.

5—7. Jehovah's incomparableness is ever being celebrated in heaven. The angelic beings, "who best can tell," as standing nearest to the throne of God, and partaking most of His nature, know that there is none like Him. (Cp. Milton, *Par. Lost*, Book V. 160, ff.).

5. *The heavens*, in contrast to the earth, include the whole celestial order of being. Cp. xix. 1; l. 6.

thy wonders] The word in the Heb. is in the singular. It denotes not the *wondrousness* of God in the abstract, but His wonderful course of action regarded as a whole, of which His 'wonderful works' are the several parts. The word conveys the idea of what is mysterious, supernatural, divine. (See on lxxi. 17.) It is especially appropriate here, since the choice of David was a factor in the great plan which was to be consummated in the mystery of the Incarnation. Cp. Is. ix. 6.

thy faithfulness &c.] **Yea, thy faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones.** It is not the congregation of Israel, but 'the company of heaven' that is meant, as in Job v. 1 and xv. 15, where we have the same parallel between 'heavens' and 'holy ones.' Holy themselves, as supernatural beings (though only relatively holy, Job xv. 15), they best know the absolute holiness of God and can praise Him most worthily (Is. vi. 3), as they watch the revelation of His wisdom in the unfolding of His purposes of grace (Eph. iii. 10).

6, 7. For who in the sky can be compared unto Jehovah?
Who is like Jehovah among the sons of God,
A God greatly to be dreaded in the council of the holy ones,

And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.
8 O LORD God of hosts,
Who *is* a strong LORD like unto thee?
Or *to* thy faithfulness round about thee?
9 Thou rulest the raging of the sea:
When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them.
10 Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain;

And to be feared above all that are round about him?

God's nature is unique, incomparable. Even among celestial beings there is none that can be compared with Him.

The phrase *bnē ēlim*, found elsewhere only in xxix. 1, denotes angels. It might be rendered *sons of the mighty*, describing them as mighty celestial beings; or *sons of the gods*, beings "belonging to the class of superhuman, heavenly powers" (Cheyne); but it is best taken as a doubly-formed plural, and rendered as in R.V. marg., *sons of God* (El); synonymous with *bnē Elōhīm* in Job i. 6; ii. 1; xxxviii. 7.

With *v.* 7 cp. Is. viii. 13. The angels form the council of the great King (Job xv. 8, R.V. marg.; Jer. xxiii. 18, 22), but He towers above them all in unapproachable majesty.

8—14. Jehovah's incomparableness is manifested in nature and in history.

8. *God of hosts*] A significant title in this connexion. See 1 Kings xxii. 19; and note on xlvi. 7.

Who is a mighty one like thee, O Jah?
And thy faithfulness is round about thee.

Name and question both recall the great hymn of redemption, Ex. xv. 2, 11. Cp. lxviii. 4; 2 Sam. vii. 22. Strength and faithfulness are the attributes upon which the Psalmist dwells, as the pledge for the fulfilment of the promise. Faithfulness surrounds Him like an atmosphere of light, as in a different aspect "clouds and darkness are round about him" (xcvii. 2).

9, 10. In this and the following verses THOU, THINE are the emphatic words.

the raging] Or, **proud swelling**. Cp. xlvi. 3. The sea represents the most turbulent and formidable of the powers of nature. Cp. xciii. 3 f.; Job xxxviii. 11. From the sea of nature the poet turns to the sea of nations of which it is the emblem (lxv. 7). At the Red Sea God proved His sovereignty over both. For *Rahab* as a name of Egypt see note on lxxxvii. 4. *Broken in pieces* denotes crushing defeat (xliv. 19): *as one that is slain* expresses the result; the ferocious monster lies pierced through and harmless. A comparison of Job xxvi. 12, 13 (on which see Dr Davidson's notes) suggests that the language is chosen so as to allude not only to the destruction of the Egyptians at the Red Sea, but to the primitive mythological idea of a conflict between God and the powers of nature personified as 'Rahab.'

Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm.
The heavens *are* thine, the earth also *is* thine:
As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them.
The north and the south thou hast created them:
Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name.
Thou hast a mighty arm:
Strong is thy hand, *and* high is thy right hand.
Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne:
Mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

with thy strong arm] Better, **With the arm of thy strength didst thou scatter thine enemies.** Cp. Is. li. 9, 10.

11. THINE are the heavens, THINE also the earth:
The world and the fulness thereof, THOU hast founded them.

Cp. xxiv. 1, 2; l. 12; lxxviii. 69; Job xxxviii. 4; Prov. iii. 19.

12. *The north and the south*] The furthest extremities of the world. Cp. Job xxvi. 7.

Tabor and Hermon] These mountains are named, not so much to represent the West and East of the land, as because they are the grandest and most conspicuous natural features of Palestine. Tabor is described as a "strange and beautiful mountain," towering "over the monotonous undulations of the surrounding hills," and "so thickly studded with trees, as to rise from the plain like a mass of verdure." In Jer. xlvi. 18 it is used as an emblem of pre-eminence. Hermon was "the image of unearthly grandeur, which nothing else but perpetual snow can give; especially as seen in the summer, when 'the firmament around it seems to be on fire.'" Stanley, *Sinai and Palestine*, pp. 350, 404.

shall rejoice in thy name] Better as R.V., **rejoice.** Nature is a revelation of its Creator, and rejoices in the fulfilment of its office. Cp. xix. 1; lxv. 12, 13.

13. THINE is an arm with might. 'Arm,' 'hand,' 'right hand' (terms frequently used in connexion with the Exodus, e.g. Ex. xv. 6, 9, 12, 16) denote not merely power but the exertion of power; and the use of verbs in the second line, lit. *Thy hand sheweth strength, thy right hand exalteth itself*, emphasises the thought, that God not only possesses but exercises His power.

14. Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of thy throne:
Lovingkindness and truth attend thy presence.

The first line recurs in xcvii. 2. Cp. too xxxiii. 5. *Righteousness*, or the principle of justice, and *judgement*, or the application of it in act, are the basis of all true government, divine as well as human (Prov. xvi. 12; xxv. 5). *Lovingkindness* and *truth* are represented as angels attending in God's Presence (xcv. 2), ready to do His bidding (xliii. 3), rather than as couriers preceding Him.

15 Blessed *is* the people that know the joyful sound:
They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance.
16 In thy name shall they rejoice all the day:
And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted.
17 For thou *art* the glory of their strength:
And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted.
18 For the LORD *is* our defence;
And the Holy One of Israel *is* our king.

15—18. Happy the people that have such a God, and whose King is the vicegerent of such a Sovereign. These verses form the transition to the second division of the Psalm, *vv.* 19 ff. From the praise of God it is natural to pass on to the felicity of His people, and from the mention of the people to the king who is their head and His representative.

15. Happy the people that know the shout of joy,
That walk, Jehovah, in the light of thy countenance.

Terū'āh may mean the jubilant shouting with which religious festivities were celebrated (xxvii. 6; xxxiii. 3; lxxxi. 1; xcv. 1, 2; 2 Sam. vi. 15); or the acclamation with which a king was greeted (xlvii. 1, 5; Num. xxiii. 21); or the blowing of trumpets upon certain solemn occasions (Lev. xxiii. 24; Num. xxix. 1). Happy indeed is Israel when it can thus greet its God (cxliv. 15), enjoying the sunshine of His favour (iv. 6).

16. *shall they rejoice...shall they be exalted*] Render with R.V. **do they rejoice...are they exalted.** Jehovah's revelation of Himself is at once the source and the subject of their joy: His unswerving adherence to His covenant is the secret of their prosperity.

17. Jehovah alone is the strength of which they boast. Cp. xliv. 6 ff.

in thy favour] Cp. xliv. 3; xxx. 7.

our horn shall be exalted] So the *Qrī*, with the LXX and Syr. The *Kthībh*, with which agree Targ. and Jer., has *wilt thou exalt our horn.* Cp. lxxv. 5, 10. By the change of person, the poet claims his share in this glorious inheritance. "*They* gives place to *we* unconsciously, as his heart swells with the joy that he paints." (Maclaren.)

18. For to Jehovah belongeth our shield;
And our King to the Holy One of Israel.

Shield, as in xlvii. 9, is a metaphor for the king as the protector of his people. The king of Israel belongs to Jehovah, because he is appointed by Him to be His representative, as his title *Jehovah's anointed* testifies; he derives his authority from Him, and therefore can claim His protection. For *Holy One of Israel* see note on lxxi. 22.

The A.V. is grammatically unjustifiable; and the R.V. marg. rendering of the second line, *Even to the Holy One of Israel our King*, though grammatically possible, and supported by some Ancient Versions, is less suitable to the context.

19—37. The mention of the king in *v.* 18 naturally leads up to the covenant with David which was briefly alluded to in *vv.* 3, 4. The

Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, 19
And saidst, I have laid help upon *one that is* mighty;
I have exalted *one* chosen out of the people.
I have found David my servant; 20
With my holy oil have I anointed him:
With whom my hand shall be established: 21
Mine arm also shall strengthen him.
The enemy shall not exact upon him; 22
Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.
And I will beat down his foes before his face, 23
And plague them that hate him.
But my faithfulness and my mercy *shall be* with him: 24

Psalmist now recites the promise in detail in a poetical expansion of the narrative in 2 Sam. vii.

19. *Then*] On the well-known occasion already referred to in *vv.* 3, 4. *in vision*] See 2 Sam. vii. 17.

to thy holy one] Nathan, or more probably David, as the principal recipient of the message. So some MSS. But the traditional text, supported apparently by all the Ancient Versions, reads the plural, *to thy saints*, or rather **to thy beloved**; i.e. the people of Israel, for whom the promise made through David to Nathan was intended. The word rendered *thy beloved* denotes Israel as the object of that *lovingkindness* which the Psalmist is celebrating. See l. 5, and Appendix, Note I.

I have laid help] Endowed him with the power and assigned to him the office of helping My people in their need. For *laid*='conferred,' of the Divine endowment of the king, see xxi. 5; and for *help* as a Divine gift to the king, see xx. 2. The phrase is unusual, but the conjectures *a diadem* (cp. *v.* 39) or *strength* are unnecessary.

one that is *mighty*] Cp. 2 Sam. xvii. 10. The word is chosen with reference to the Divine 'might' of which he was the representative, *v.* 13: cp. xx. 6; xxi. 13.

one *chosen*] Cp. *v.* 3; lxxviii. 70; 1 Kings viii. 16.

20. *I have found*] Sought out and provided. Cp. 1 Sam. xiii. 14; xvi. 1; Acts xiii. 22. *David my servant*] See on lxxviii. 70, and cp. 2 Sam. iii. 18; vii. 5, 8. *have I anointed him*] 1 Sam. xvi. 1, 12 f.

21. *With whom* &c.] My helping hand shall continually be with him: a stronger equivalent for "the LORD was with him," 1 Sam. xviii. 12, 14; 2 Sam. v. 10.

22. *shall not exact upon him*] Shall not oppress him as a creditor oppresses a debtor. But the sense is doubtful, and the word probably means *surprise him, fall upon him unawares*, as in lv. 15.

nor the son of wickedness afflict him] The phrase is taken from 2 Sam. vii. 10, where however it is applied to the people.

23. But I will beat down his adversaries before him,
And smite them that hate him.

24. And my faithfulness and lovingkindness shall be with him.

And in my name shall his horn be exalted.
25 I will set his hand also in the sea,
And his right hand in the rivers.
26 He shall cry unto me, Thou *art* my Father,
My God, and the rock of my salvation.
27 Also I will make him *my* firstborn,
Higher than the kings of the earth.
28 My mercy will I keep for him for evermore,
And my covenant *shall* stand fast with him.
29 His seed also will I make *to endure* for ever,
And his throne as the days of heaven.
30 If his children forsake my law,
And walk not in my judgments;

25. *in the sea...in the rivers*] R.V., **on the sea...on the rivers**; i.e. I will extend his dominion to the Mediterranean on the west, and to the Euphrates on the north-east, the boundaries of the land according to ancient promise. See Gen. xv. 18; Ex. xxiii. 31; Deut. xi. 24; 1 Kings iv. 24; cp. Ps. lxxii. 8; lxxx. 11. The plural *rivers* is a poetical generalisation, or may denote the Euphrates and its canals.

26. The promise made to David on behalf of Solomon is here extended to David himself. For *my God, and the rock of my salvation* cp. xviii. 2; Deut. xxxii. 15.

27. **I also** corresponds to the emphatic *He* at the beginning of *v.* 26. It is God's answer to David's cry of filial love. The titles *son* and *firstborn* applied to Israel (Ex. iv. 22; Jer. xxxi. 9) are conferred upon the king who is Israel's representative: and the promise made to Israel (Deut. xxvi. 19, cp. xxviii. 1) is here transferred to David,

I also will appoint him as firstborn,
Most high above the kings of the earth.

David's posterity is included in his person: and the high promise, never fully realised in any of his successors, points forward to Him Whom St John styles in language borrowed from this verse and *v.* 37, "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."

28, 29. The emphasis is on *for evermore.* The permanence of the promise is expressed in the strongest terms. Cp. 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16.

Once more too the notes of lovingkindness and faithfulness are sounded, for the word rendered *shall stand fast* is from the same root as the word for faithfulness; hence R.V. marg. *shall be faithful.*

as the days of heaven] I.e. for ever; the heaven is the emblem of permanence as well as stability. Again a phrase originally referring to the nation (Deut. xi. 21) is applied to the king.

30—34. The sins of David's descendants will bring chastisement to them, but they will not annul the promise to David. Man's unfaithful-

If they break my statutes, 31
And keep not my commandments;
Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, 32
And their iniquity with stripes.
Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from 33
him,
Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.
My covenant will I not break, 34
Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.
Once have I sworn by my holiness 35
That I will not lie unto David.
His seed shall endure for ever, 36
And his throne as the sun before me.
It shall be established for ever as the moon, 37
And *as* a faithful witness in heaven. Selah.

ness cannot make void the faithfulness of God, though it may modify the course of its working.

31. *If they break*] Lit. **profane**.

32. *The rod...stripes*] From 2 Sam. vii. 14, where the fuller phrases *the rod of men...the stripes of the children of men* seem to mean correction such as even human parents know they must administer. The paternal relation involves the duty of chastisement (Prov. xxiii. 13 f.; Heb. xii. 9 f.).

33. But my lovingkindness will I not break off from him,
Neither be false to my faithfulness.

The word rendered *break off* is an unusual one to apply to lovingkindness, and its form is anomalous. The change of one letter however gives the word used in 1 Chr. xvii. 13, **I will not take away**, and this emendation should probably be adopted. *Be false to* is the word found in 1 Sam. xv. 29, "The Strength of Israel *will not lie.*"

34. *break*] Lit. **profane**, as in *v.* 31. God's covenant, like His laws, is a sacred thing. Men may violate His laws, but He will not violate His covenant.

the thing that is gone out of my lips] The word once spoken is irrevocable. The phrase is used of vows in Num. xxx. 12; Deut. xxiii. 23.

35—37. The irreversible nature of a promise confirmed by God's oath.

35. *Once*] Once for all (LXX ἅπαξ, Vulg. *semel*): or, *one thing.*

have I sworn] Cp. *v.* 3. *by my holiness*] See note on lx. 6.

that I will not lie] R.V. omits *that*, and makes this clause parallel to, not dependent on, the preceding line.

36. Cp. *vv.* 4, 29; lxxii. 5, 7, 17.

37. Construction and meaning are doubtful. (1) The original passage in 2 Sam. vii. 16 is in favour of making *his throne* the subject to *shall be established*, and against the marginal alternatives of R.V., *As the*

38 But thou hast cast off and abhorred,
Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed.
39 Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast profaned his crown *by casting it* to the ground.

moon which is established for ever, and as *the faithful witness in the sky:* or, *and is a faithful witness in the sky.*

(2) The A.V., with which substantially agrees the R.V., **And (as) the faithful witness in the sky**, raises the question what is meant by 'the faithful witness in the sky.' Is it the sun, or the moon, or the rainbow? Or is it the fixed laws of nature which are appealed to in Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, xxxiii. 20 f., 25 f., as a symbol of the permanence of God's covenant with Israel and with David? This last explanation is the best, but it seems somewhat far-fetched; and the omission of the particle of comparison *as* points (3) to another rendering: **And the witness in the sky is faithful.** The witness is God Himself, Who thus confirms His promise with a final attestation. Cp. Jer. xlii. 5, "Jehovah be a true and *faithful witness* against us": Job xvi. 19, "my witness is in heaven."

38—45. But present realities are in appalling contrast to this glorious promise: the king is rejected and dethroned, his kingdom is overrun by invaders, his enemies are triumphant.

38. And THOU, thou hast cast off and rejected,
Hast been enraged with thine anointed.

The Psalmist has drawn out God's promise in the fullest detail, and now he confronts God with it:—THOU Who art omnipotent, faithful, and just; THOU Who hast made this promise, and confirmed it with the most solemn oath; THOU hast broken it! Some punishment might have been expected (*vv.* 30 ff.), but not this total abandonment (*vv.* 33 ff.). David's heir has the same fate as Saul (1 Sam. xv. 23, 26), in spite of the express promise that it should not be so (2 Sam. vii. 15).

The audacity of the expostulation scandalised many ancient Jewish commentators, and the famous Aben-Ezra of Toledo (d. 1167) relates that there was a certain wise and pious man in Spain, who would neither read nor listen to this Psalm. But the boldness is that of faith, not of irreverence: it finds a parallel in xliv. 9 ff., and in Habakkuk's questionings (i. 2 ff., 13 ff.).

39. Thou hast abhorred the covenant of thy servant:
Thou hast cast his desecrated crown to the ground.

Thine anointed, thy servant (cp. *v.* 20) include both David and the successor who represents him. The titles plead the claim which the king had on God's protection.

The word *nēzer* means (1) consecration, and (2) the crown or diadem of the high priest (Ex. xxix. 6) or the king (2 Sam. i. 10), as the mark of consecration to their office. For the phrase *profaned to the ground* cp. lxxiv. 7.

40. Insensibly the king is identified with the nation whose head and representative he was. The first line is taken from the description of Israel as a vine in lxxx. 12.

Thou hast broken down all his hedges; 40
Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin.
All that pass by the way spoil him: 41
He is a reproach to his neighbours.
Thou hast set up the right hand of his adversaries; 42
Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice.
Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, 43
And hast not made him to stand in the battle.
Thou hast made his glory to cease, 44
And cast his throne down to the ground.
The days of his youth hast thou shortened: 45
Thou hast covered him with shame. Selah.

How long, LORD? wilt thou hide thyself, for ever? 46
Shall thy wrath burn like fire?
Remember how short my time is: 47

hedges] Or, as R.V. in lxxx. 12, **fences.**

41. The first line from lxxx. 12, with the substitution of *spoil* for *pluck:* the second from lxxix. 4; cp. xliv. 13. The 'neighbours' are surrounding nations, once tributary to Israel.

42. *Thou hast set up*] R.V. **thou hast exalted.** Contrast *vv.* 19, 24. *to rejoice*] The malignant delight of enemies is constantly deprecated as an aggravation of the bitterness of misfortune. Cp. xxv. 2; xxx. 1; xxxv. 19, 24 ff.; xxxviii. 16; and the close parallel in Lam. ii. 17.

43. **Yea, thou turnest back the edge of his sword** (R.V.): i.e. not as A.V. might seem to mean, bluntest it, but as the parallelism shews, makest it give way in battle. Cp. 2 Sam. i. 22.

44. *his glory*] R.V. **his brightness**: the lustre of his kingdom.

45. He is prematurely old. Cp. cii. 23. The words might be figuratively applied to the nation (Hos. vii. 9), or to the kingdom, prematurely brought to an end: but it is more natural to regard them as referring to the king himself. Jehoiachin was but 18 (2 Kings xxiv. 8), or according to 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9, only 8 years old, when he came to the throne, and he reigned only three months and ten days. The prime of his life was spent in exile, apparently in actual confinement in which he was literally 'clothed with dishonour' (2 Kings xxv. 29).

46—51. The Psalmist appeals to God to withdraw His wrath and remove this contradiction, pleading the shortness of life and the taunts of God's enemies as grounds for a speedy answer.

46. **How long, Jehovah, wilt thou hide thyself for ever?**
(How long) shall thy wrath burn like fire?

A repetition of lxxix. 5, with slight variations.

47. Literally, if the text is right, *O remember what a fleeting life I am!* but it is possible that the letters of the word *chēled* have been

Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain?
48 What man *is he that* liveth, and shall not see death?
Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Selah.

49 Lord, where *are* thy former lovingkindnesses,
Which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?
50 Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants;
How I do bear in my bosom *the reproach of* all the mighty people;

accidentally transposed and that we should read *chādēl*, as in xxxix. 4: *how frail*, or, *transitory*, *I am*. As in that Psalm (cp. *v.* 13) and in Job vii. 6 ff, xiv. 1 ff, the shortness and uncertainty of life are pleaded as a ground for the speedy restoration of God's favour. The Psalmist desires to see the solution of the riddle with his own eyes, and doubtless he gives utterance to the feelings of many pious souls in the Exile, whose faith was tried by the thought that they would not live to see the fulfilment of the prophecies of restoration.

wherefore &c.] **For what vanity hast thou created all the sons of men!** Must life end thus in unsatisfied longing? Cp. xxxix. 5, 11.

48. What man is he that shall live on, and not see death,
That shall deliver his soul from the hand of Sheol?

The word for *man* is *gĕbĕr*, 'strong man,' as distinguished from women, children, and non-combatants, as much as to say, What man is so strong that he shall live on and escape the iron grasp of Death?

"There is no armour against fate,
Death lays his icy hand on kings."

49. After an interlude of music the Psalmist resumes his prayer. He returns to the thoughts of God's lovingkindness and faithfulness, from which he started (*v.* 1). But His lovingkindnesses seem to belong to an age that is past and gone: have they vanished never to return? The faith which had to look for the manifestation of God's love in this world was often sorely tried. See Ps. lxxvii; Is. lxiii. For the question cp. Judg. vi. 13; and for the second line, Mic. vii. 20.

in thy truth] **In thy faithfulness.**

50. *the reproach of thy servants*] The taunts which they have to bear as the servants of a God Who, say their enemies, cannot or will not help them. Cp. lxxiv. 10, 18, 22; lxxix. 4, 10.

how I do bear &c.] The Massoretic text must be rendered, *How I do bear in my bosom all the many peoples*. It is grammatically anomalous and gives no satisfactory sense. A simple emendation, which has some support from Ancient Versions, reads thus:

How I bear in my bosom the dishonouring of the peoples.

Cp. the similar phrase with the same word for 'dishonouring' (A.V. *shame*) in Ezek. xxxiv. 29; xxxvi. 6, 15. As a faithful Israelite he must perforce bear the burden of his people's shame.

Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O LORD; 51
Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed.

Blessed *be* the LORD for evermore. Amen, and Amen. 52

51. Cp. lxxix. 12, of which *v.* 50 is also a partial reminiscence.

the footsteps of thine anointed] They are like a rabble hooting and insulting him wherever he goes. Cp. xvii. 11; Jer. xii. 6 (R.V.). May not the phrase have been suggested by the recollection of actual insults offered to the discrowned Jehoiachin as he was led through the streets of Babylon in the conqueror's triumph? Insults offered to the king are insults at once to Jehovah and to the people whose representative he was.

The Targum interprets the words of the delay of Messiah's Advent. "For thine enemies reproach, O Lord, they reproach the slowness of the footsteps of Thine Anointed."

52. The doxology marks the close of Book iii. Cp. xli. 13; lxxii. 18, 19; cvi. 48. In P.B.V. it is joined, somewhat incongruously, to the preceding verse. But though it is no part of the original Psalm, it is entirely in harmony with the spirit of it, as an expression of the faith which can bless God even when the visible signs of His love are withdrawn. Cp. Job i. 21.

APPENDIX.

Note I.

On the word Chāsid.

The word *chāsīd* is characteristic of the Psalter, in which it is found 25 times. Elsewhere it occurs only in Deut. xxxiii. 8; 1 Sam. ii. 9; Prov. ii. 8; Jer. iii. 12; Mic. vii. 2. (2 Sam. xxii. 26, and 2 Chr. vi. 41 are of course not independent passages.) It is variously rendered in A.V., 'godly,' 'merciful,' or, after the Sept. ὅσιος, Vulg. *sanctus*, 'holy,' 'saints.' Its exact meaning, however, is disputed. Is it (1) active, denoting the character of the man who practises dutiful love (*chesed*) to God and to his fellow-men (A.V. and R.V. 'godly' or 'merciful'): or (2) passive, denoting the state of one who is the object of God's lovingkindness (R.V. marg., 'one that He favoureth:' cp. A.V. marg. to lxxxvi. 2)? The form of the word is not decisive between the two senses, and appeal must be made to the usage of the word. In favour of (1) it is urged that the word certainly has an active sense in cxlv. 17 and Jer. iii. 12, where it is applied to God: and also in Ps. xii. 1; xviii. 25; xliii. 1; Mic. vii. 2; where it is used of the quality of lovingkindness between man and man.

On the other hand in favour of (2) it may be urged that the substantive *chesed* from which the adjective *chāsīd* is derived denotes in the Psalter almost without exception God's lovingkindness to man. It occurs there 127 times, and in three cases only is it used of man's love to man (cix. 12, 16; cxli. 5), though this sense is common elsewhere. It is never used in the Psalter of man's love to God, and indeed it is doubtful whether it is really so used at all. The passages generally quoted (Hos. vi. 4, 6; Jer. ii. 2) are not decisive.

If the primary meaning of *chāsīd* is to be governed (as seems reasonable) by that of *chesed* in the Psalms, it must certainly mean 'one who is the object of Jehovah's lovingkindness.' And this sense suits the predominant usage of the word best. It is used 15 times with a pronoun to express the relation of the covenant people, or individuals in it, to Jehovah (My, Thy, His *chasīdīm*), in connexions where the position into which they have been brought by Jehovah's grace is a more appropriate thought than that of their response to that grace either by love to God or love to their fellow-men. It is not man's love to God or to his fellow-man which is pleaded as the ground of acceptance or urged as the motive for duty, but the fact that Jehovah by His free lovingkindness has brought the nation and its members into covenant with Himself. In its primary sense then the word implies no moral praise or merit; but it

came, not unnaturally, to be connected with the idea of *chesed* as 'loving-kindness' between man and man, and to be used of the character which reflected that love of which it was itself the object; and finally was applied even to God Himself.

Note II.

On the Title 'Most High.'

The usage of the title 'Most High' (*Elyōn*) should be carefully examined.

(1) As used by non-Israelites, it appears as the designation of the Supreme God in the mouth of the Canaanite priest-king Melchisedek (Gen. xiv. 18—22); it is employed by Balaam (Num. xxiv. 16); it is put into the mouth of the presumptuous king of Babylon (Is. xiv. 14).

(2) Its application to Jehovah from the Israelite standpoint is limited to poetry. It occurs in Deut. xxxii. 8 (note the connexion with the partition of the earth among the *nations*); Lam. iii. 35, 38; and 21 times in the Psalter [and in 2 Sam. xxii. 14 = Ps. xviii. 13], always, with one exception (cvii. 11), in the first four books. It is nowhere found in the Prophets.

(3) In the Aramaic of the Book of Daniel it occurs, in one peculiar passage (vii. 18—27) in the plural of majesty; and a synonymous word is used frequently, but, with one exception (vii. 25), in the mouth of Nebuchadnezzar or Belshazzar, or in words addressed to them. It comes to be a favourite word with the author of Ecclesiasticus (ὕψιστος, without the article), and occurs also in 2 Macc. iii. 31.

Note III.

On the Hebrew Tenses.

The English reader may be at a loss to understand how it can so often be doubtful whether a verb should be rendered by the past or the future tense. The uncertainty arises from the peculiar character of the Hebrew Tenses, which denote *mode* of action rather than *time* of action. The fundamental idea of the 'perfect' (sometimes called the 'past') is *completed* action: the fundamental idea of the 'imperfect' (sometimes called the 'future') is *incomplete* action.

In simple narrative prose the 'perfect' usually refers to the past, and the 'imperfect' to the future. But in the higher styles of poetry and prophecy both tenses are used with much greater freedom.

(1) A future event may be regarded as having already taken place, either in order that it may be more forcibly presented to the mind, or because it is contemplated as being absolutely certain to happen; and in such cases the perfect tense, sometimes called the 'perfect of certainty,' or 'prophetic perfect,' is used. See Ps. xxii. 29; xxxvii. 20.

(2) A past event may be regarded, for the sake of vivid description, as being still in progress, and the 'imperfect' tense may be employed with reference to it. Thus in Ps. vii. 15, 'the ditch *he was making*' (imperf.) represents the wicked man as still engaged upon his plot when it proves his own ruin. This usage corresponds to the 'historic present,' and is very common in poetry.

The 'imperfect' is also used as a frequentative, of repeated action, and to express general truths.

Hence it is often doubtful, as in numerous instances in Ps. xviii, whether a Hebrew imperfect refers to the past or the future, and should be rendered by past, present, or future. The decision must be regulated by the context and the general view taken of the sense of the passage. Not seldom the peculiar force of the Hebrew tenses cannot be expressed in an English translation without awkward circumlocutions.

NEW TESTAMENT QUOTATIONS FROM THE PSALMS.

Psalm ii. 1, 2	quoted	Acts iv. 25, 26.
7	,,	Acts xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5; v. 5.
8, 9	,,	Rev. ii. 26, 27; xii. 5; xix. 15.
iv. 4	,,	Eph. iv. 26.
v. 9	,,	Rom. iii. 13.
vi. 3 *a*	,,	John xii. 27.
8	,,	Matt. vii. 23; Lk. xiii. 27.
viii. 2	,,	Matt. xxi. 16.
4—6	,,	Heb. ii. 6—8.
6	,,	1 Cor. xv. 27; Eph. i. 22.
x. 7	,,	Rom. iii. 14.
xiv. 1 *c*, 2 *b*, 3	,,	Rom. iii. 10—12.
xvi. 8—11	,,	Acts ii. 25—28.
10 *b*	,,	Acts xiii. 35.
xviii. 2 *b*	,,	Heb. ii. 13.
49	,,	Rom. xv. 9.
xix. 4	,,	Rom. x. 18.
xxii. 1	,,	Matt. xxvii. 46; Mk. xv. 34.
7	,,	Matt. xxvii. 39; Mk. xv. 29; Lk. xxiii. 35.
8	,,	Matt. xxvii. 43.
18	,,	John xix. 24; cp. Matt. xxvii. 35; Mk. xv. 24; Lk. xxiii. 34.
22	,,	Heb. ii. 12.
xxiv. 1	,,	1 Cor. x. 26 [28].
xxxi. 5 *a*	,,	Lk. xxiii. 46.
xxxii. 1, 2	,,	Rom. iv. 7, 8.
xxxiv. 8	,,	1 Pet. ii. 3.
12—16	,,	1 Pet. iii. 10—12.
20	,,	John xix. 36.
xxxv. 19 *b*	,,	John xv. 25.
xxxvi. 1 *b*	,,	Rom. iii. 18.
xxxvii. 11 *a*	,,	Matt. v. 5.
xxxviii. 11	,,	Lk. xxiii. 49.
xl. 6—8	,,	Heb. x. 5—7.
xli. 9	,,	John xiii. 18.
13	,,	Lk. i. 68.
xlii. 5	,,	Matt. xxvi. 38; Mk. xiv. 34.

Psalm xliv. 22	quoted	Rom. viii. 36.
xlv. 6, 7	,,	Heb. i. 8, 9.
xlviii. 2	,,	Matt. v. 35.
li. 4	,,	Rom. iii. 4.
liii. 1—3	,,	Rom. iii. 10—12.
lv. 22	,,	1 Pet. v. 7.
lxii. 12	,,	Matt. xvi. 27; Rom. ii. 6.
lxviii. 18	,,	Eph. iv. 8.
lxix. 4	,,	John xv. 25.
9 *a*	,,	John ii. 17.
9 *b*	,,	Rom. xv. 3.
21	,,	Matt. xxvii. 34, 48; Mk. xv. 36; Lk. xxiii. 36; John xix. 28, 29.
22, 23	,,	Rom. xi. 9, 10.
25	,,	Acts i. 20.
lxxii. 18	,,	Lk. i. 68.
lxxviii. 2	,,	Matt. xiii. 35.
24	,,	John vi. 31.
lxxxii. 6	,,	John x. 34.
lxxxvi. 9	,,	Rev. xv. 4.
lxxxviii. 8	,,	Lk. xxiii. 49.
lxxxix. 10	,,	Lk. i. 51.
20	,,	Acts xiii. 22.
xc. 4	,,	2 Pet. iii. 8.
xci. 11, 12	,,	Matt. iv. 6; Lk. iv. 10, 11.
13	,,	Lk. x. 19.
xciv. 11	,,	1 Cor. iii. 20.
14	,,	Rom. xi. 1, 2.
xcv. 7—11	,,	Heb. iii. 7—11, 15, 18; iv. 1, 3, 5, 7.
xcvii. 7	,,	Heb. i. 6.
xcviii. 3	,,	Lk. i. 54.
cii. 25—27	,,	Heb. i. 10—12.
ciii. 17	,,	Lk. i. 50.
civ. 4	,,	Heb. i. 7.
cv. 8, 9	,,	Lk. i. 72, 73.
cvi. 10	,,	Lk. i. 71.
45	,,	Lk. i. 72.
48	,,	Lk. i. 68.
cvii. 9	,,	Lk. i. 53.
cix. 8	,,	Acts i. 20.
25	,,	Matt. xxvii. 39.
cx. 1	,,	Matt. xxii. 44; Mk. xii. 36; Lk. xx. 42, 43; Acts ii. 34, 35; Heb. i. 13. Cp. Matt. xxvi. 64; Mk. xiv. 62; xvi. 19; Lk. xxii. 69; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Eph. i. 20; Col. iii. 1; Heb. i. 3; viii. 1; x. 12, 13; xii. 2; 1 Pet. iii. 22.
4	,,	Heb. v. 6; vi. 20; vii. 17, 21.
cxi. 9 *a*	,,	Lk. i. 68.
9 *c*	,,	Lk. i. 49.

Psalm cxii. 9	quoted	2 Cor. ix. 9.
cxvi. 10	,,	2 Cor. iv. 13.
cxvii. 1	,,	Rom. xv. 11.
cxviii. 6	,,	Heb. xiii. 6.
22, 23	,,	Matt. xxi. 42; Mk. xii. 10, 11; Lk. xx. 17; Acts iv. 11; 1 Pet. ii. 4, 7.
25, 26	,,	Matt. xxi. 9; xxiii. 39; Mk. xi. 9; Lk. xiii. 35; xix. 38; John xii. 13.
cxxxii. 5	,,	Acts vii. 46.
11	,,	Acts ii. 30.
17	,,	Lk. i. 69.
cxxxv. 14 *a*	,,	Heb. x. 30.
cxl. 3 *b*	,,	Rom. iii. 13.
cxliii. 2 *b*	,,	Rom. iii. 20.
cxlvi. 6	,,	Acts iv. 24; xiv. 15.

This list includes a few passages which are not formally introduced as quotations, though they are taken directly from the Psalms: but it does not attempt to collect the numerous indirect allusions and references to the thought and language of the Psalms which are to be found in the New Testament.

INDEX.

Aben Ezra quoted, 540
Abraham, promises to, 423
Absalom's rebellion, see *David*
acrostic Psalms, xlviii
Adullam, 320
Ahab, 243
Ahaz, 254, 308
Ahithophel, 307
Alāmōth, xxii, 255, 267
alphabetic Psalms, xlviii
Al-tascheth, 321
Amalekites, 501
Amaziah, 339
Ammonites, 501
Amos, 483
angels, 475, 496, 533: functions of, 279; guardians of nations, 495
anointed of Jehovah, 504, 508
anthropomorphism, 477
anthropopathy, 239
Antiochus Epiphanes, 440
appear before God, 228, 508
Aquila, liv, and notes *passim*
Arabic poetry, xxxi
Aramaic language, liii
Aram-naharaim, 338
Ark, the symbol of Jehovah's Presence, 238, 261, 354, 379; capture of, 477; translation to Zion, 375; to the Temple, 375
arm of God, 535
Artaxerxes Ochus, 236, 442, 499
Asaph, 427
Asaph, Psalms of, 276 ff., 427 ff.; their characteristics, 428 ff.
Assyria, 501
Assyrians, deliverance of Jerusalem from, see *Sennacherib*
Augustine quoted, 372
Authorised Version, lvi, and notes *passim*
Azkārā, 407

Babylon, 519 ff.; see *Exile*
Baca, vale of, 507
Baethgen quoted, 258
balsam-trees, 507
Bashan, 386
Bathsheba, 285
Benjamin, tribe of, 392
Bickell quoted, 267
birds, sacred, 506
Black, J. S. quoted, 390
bloodguiltiness, 293
bones, meaning of, 232, 292
book of life, 406
bottle, 319
'bring back the captivity,' meaning of phrase, 303
Bruston quoted, 248

Carlyle quoted, 285
chāsīd, 233, 279, 544
Cheyne quoted, 306, 327, 483, 488, 495, 523, &c.
Chrysostom quoted, 353
covenant of God, 240, 279, 282, 447
Coverdale quoted, 349, &c.
Cromwell, 378

daughter of Tyre, 251
daughters of Judah, 266
David the founder of the Psalter, xxxii ff.; Psalms of, meaning of the title, xxix, 284; Psalms connected by their titles or by conjecture with events in his life, at Gibeah, 332; at Gath, 315; during Saul's persecution, 295, 304, 320; his war with Edom, 235, 338; the translation of the ark, 375; his sin and repentance, 285; the time of Absalom's rebellion, 227, 307, 325, 344, 347, 352
David's last words, 416; Messianic promises made to him, 530 ff.
Davidson, Professor A. B., quoted, 534
death, O.T. view of, lxxv ff., 267 ff., 273 f., 431 ff., 526 ff.
Deborah, song of, 376 ff.
decalogue, 280, 282, 492
Degrees, Songs of, xxv
Delitzsch quoted, 274, 325, 360, 472, &c.
Dillmann quoted, 408
Doeg, 295
dogs, 334
dove, 309, 384
doxologies, 423, 543
Driver quoted, 286, 389

Earle quoted, 249
early rain, 364
east wind, 265
Edmund, St, his favourite Ps., 418
Edom, David's conquest of, 338
Edomites, 501
Egypt, references to, 377, 394
El, see *God*
Elōah, see *God*
Elōhīm, see *God*
Elōhīm, judges addressed as, 327, 495
Elohistic Psalms, xl, 223
Endor, 502
Engedi, 320
Enoch, supposed reference to, 274, 438
Ephraim, 342
Ephraimites, 467
Epiphany, Ps. for the, 418
Ethan, 348, 427, 524 f.
Ethānīm, 489
Ethiopia, 395
Ewald quoted, 227, 332, 338, 442, &c.
Exile, Psalms referring to the, 303, 396, 430, 456, 483; restoration from, 375, 510, 519, 531; its significance, 377
Ezekiel, 401, 412, 483, 531
Ezrahite, 524 f.

figurative language: derived from chaff, 503; conquered enemies, 370; cup of wine, 340, 452; desert travel, 330; dove, 309, 384; falling wall, 349; flock, 443; Levitical ritual, 435; morass, 399; mountain fires, 503; neck-chains, 433; progress of an oriental king, 380; registers of citizens, 406, 522; smoke, 379; snowstorm, 386; swollen river, 398; wax, 379; winds, 472
flesh, 317, 353, 361, 472, 505
flood=river, 368
fool, meaning of term, 271, 301
forgiveness, words for, 288
full moon, 490
future life, view of, lxxv ff., 268 ff., 273 f., 431 f., 437 f., 526 ff.

gall, 404
gate of the city, 401
Gebal, 501
Gideon's victory, 502
Gilead, 342
Gittith, xxiii, 490
glory, 437 f., 510
glory=soul, 324
glory of God, see *God*
GOD=Jehovah, 389
God, Hebrew words for; *El*, 277, 297, 322, 353; *Elōah*, 278; *Elōhīm*, xl, 277, &c.; the Name of, 238, 304, 450; His Name Jehovah, 277; *Jehovah Tseḇāōth*=LORD of Hosts, 225, 257, 485, 488; *Jah*, 380, 461
His titles: *Adōnai*, 'Lord,' 515; *'Elyōn*, 'Most High,' 256, 278, 321, 434, 471, 476, 545; the living God, 228; King, 237, 260, 391, 446; Rock, 232, 348, 439; Judge, 429, 450, 494 ff.; lion of Judah, 453; a sun and shield, 509; God of Abraham, 262; of Jacob, 258; Holy One of Israel, 415, 473; Shepherd of Israel, 429
His attributes: faithfulness, 531; holiness, 341; light, 233; lovingkindness, 231, 242, 322, 354, 530; righteousness, 293, 363, 410, 513, 535; truth, 233, 322, 325, 513; jealousy, 476; wrath, 485; attributes personified, 233, 322, 535
His glory, 481, 513; His sovereignty, 290; His incomparableness, 533; His revelation of Himself, 288; the Spirit of God, 292; His covenant with Israel, 240; with David, 532; His wondrous works, 413; His arm, 535; anthropomorphic descriptions of, 477; description of His Advent, 277; introduced as Speaker, 280, 429; revealed in Nature and in History, 534; to be acknowledged by the nations, 504, 516; communion with Him man's highest good, 353 ff., 438
gods, judges addressed as, 327, 495
Gospel of Peter, 404
grace, 510
Great Bible, lvi, 380, 381, and notes *passim*
Gregory VII, 249
grin, 334

Habakkuk, Prayer of, 376, 456
Hagarenes, 501
Haggai, 377, 510
hair, worn long in vows, 390
Ham, 475
harvest thanksgiving, Ps. for, 372
health, 374
heart, 353, 472, 505
Hebrew language, mode of writing, li
Hebrew tenses, 545
Hebrew poetry, various kinds of, ix; form of, xliv ff.; strophical arrangement, xlvii; alphabetic or acrostic Psalms, xlviii
Hebrew Text of O. T., xlix ff.; date of MSS., xlix; history of, l; imperfections of, l; apparent errors in, 230, 246, 267, 318, 330, 335, 395, 411, 474, 494, 539, 542, &c.
Heman, 524 f.
Hermon, 230, 386, 535
Hexapla, Origen's, liv
Hezekiah, xxxiv, 253, 366, 417, 519, 524
history, allusions to earlier, characteristic of Pss. of Asaph, 429; the Flood, 301; Babel, 310; the plagues, 473; the Exodus, 376 ff., 491 ff.; passage of the Red Sea, 368, 446, 461, 492; destruction of the Egyptians, 446; Sinai, 277,

382; journey through the wilderness, 382, 447, 468 ff.; Korah, 310, 312; crossing of the Jordan, 368; occupation of Canaan, 237, 260; period of the Judges, 383 ff., 502; capture of the ark, 477
history, didactic use of, 429, 463
Holy One of Israel, 415, 473
holy ones, 533
Horace quoted, 256
Hosea, 277
hours of prayer, 312
house of God, 400
Huguenots, 377
hyssop, 291

'Imprecatory Psalms,' lxx ff., 398 ff.
incense, 370
innocence, assertions of, lxix f.; national, 236, 240
interpretation of Psalms as referring to our Lord, lxiv, 308, 398, 465
Isaiah, Pss. connected with prophecies of, 254, 277, 296, 448, 494, 519
Isaiah xl—lxvi, Pss. related to, 286, 375, 519
Ishmaelites, 501
Israel, history of reviewed, 462 ff.; hopes for the restoration of the Northern tribes, 377, 483; the 'Messianic nation,' 373
ivory palaces, 250

Jabin, 502
jackals, 356
Jacob, 430, 461
JAH, 380
Jeduthun, xxiii, 348, 427, 458
Jehoiachin, Pss. thought to refer to, 227, 396, 531, 540
Jehoram, 243
Jehoshaphat, xxxiv, 254, 375, 499
Jehovah Tsebāōth, 257; see *God*
Jeremiah, Psalms attributed to, xxxiv, 307, 396 ff., 410, 524; prophecies of, referred to, 483
Jeroboam II, 243
Jerome's work on the Psalter, lv; his version referred to, 327, 507, and notes *passim*
Jerusalem, situation of, 263, 520; love for, 345
John Hyrcanus, 242
Jonadab, 410
Jonathan, 347
Joseph, 430, 461
Josiah, 277, 332, 490
Jotham, 268
Judah, tribe of, 342, 392
Judas foreshadowed, 308
Judas Maccabaeus, 440
judges censured, 325 ff., 494 ff.

Kadesh, 468
Kay quoted, 286, 326, 368, 414, &c.
Keble quoted, 465
Keilah, men of, 304, 318
Kimchi quoted, 326
king, position and typical significance of the Israelite, 243, 416 ff.; lofty language applied to, 243 ff.; duties of, 416 ff.; the ideal, 416 ff.; shield a metaphor for, 536; his relation to Jehovah, 536; Jehovah's firstborn, 538
Korah, 224, 310, 312
Korah, Psalms of the Sons of, xxix, 223 ff.; their characteristics, 224 f.; date, 225
Korahites, history of the, 224
Kri see *Qri*
Kthībh, li, 306, 335, 414, 434, 461, 462, 536, &c.

Lagarde quoted, 236, 258
Latin Versions, lv
law, meaning of word, 465; references to the, 270, 291
leper, life of a, 523
leprosy, sin compared to, 289
Levites, 490
life, blessing of long, 346
liturgical use, Psalms probably written for, 360, 365, 372, 489; altered for, 285, 303, 332, 407; in Jewish Church, xxiv, 259, 287, 373, 378, 418, 479, 489, 490, 496; in Christian Church, 353, 373, 378, 418; see also *Proper Psalms*
living God, see *God*
LORD=Jehovah, see *God*
Lord=Adonai, see *God*
LORD of hosts, see *God*
Lot, children of, 502
lovingkindness, 513
Luther, 255, 287

Maccabaean Psalms, supposed, xxxv, 227, 234 f., 339, 344, 375, 417, 430, 440, 449, 498
Maccabees, history of the, 440
Maclaren quoted, 256, 477, 536
Mahalath, 301
Mahalath Leannoth, 524
man, Heb. words for, 269, 299, 317, 542
Manasseh, 308
Manasseh, tribe of, 342
marriage procession, 252
marvellous works, 413
Maschīl, xviii
Massah, 468
Massōrā, xlix
Massoretic Text, xlix; see *Hebrew Text*
Matthew's Bible, lvi
meekness, 247
memorial, the, 407
Meribah, 468, 492
Messianic hope, lviii ff.; the royal Messiah, lviii; the suffering Messiah, lxi; the Son of Man, lxii; the Advent

of God, lxiii; the destiny of the nations, lxv
Messianic Psalms, 243, 259, 308, 378, 397, 417, 511, 515, 518 ff.
Messianic references in the Targum, see *Targum*
Micah, 268, 269, 276, 277
Michtam, xviii
Midianites, 502
Milton quoted, 324, 514, 523
mizmor, xiii, xvii
Moab, 342
Moabite stone, 335, 340
moe, 399
monster, 412
Morians, 395
Moses, Blessing of, 376; Song of, alluded to, 443, 461, 534, &c.
mourning, rites of, 477
Münster quoted, 380, 392, 404, 434, 444, &c.
Musician, the chief, xix

Name of God, 238; see *God*
Naphtali, tribe of, 392
Nathan, 537
nations, destiny of, lxv ff., 521; to bring tribute to Jehovah, 394, 455; to recognise His supremacy, 258, 259, 261, 367, 373, 504; and worship Him, 517; to become citizens of Zion, 518 ff.; summoned to hear instruction, 269, 371; to submit to the true king, 420; relation of Israel to, lxvi, 372 f.
nations, the neighbouring, hostility of to Israel, 239, 482, 486, 498 ff.
nature, a revelation of God, 447, 535; a witness to man's action, 279
Neginah, 344
Neginōth, xxii
Nehemiah, Pss. attributed to the age of, 332, 442, 499
Nehilōth, xxii
new moon, 490
nobles, oppression of poor by, 296
nomad life, language of, 405
Northern Israel, tribes of mentioned, 484; hopes for restoration of, 377, 483

Oehler's O. T. theology quoted, 277, 280, 293, 438, 485, &c.
oil, symbol of joy, 249
Old Testament, position of Psalter in, xii; triple division, xii; order of Books, xiii; text of, xlix ff.; Versions of, li ff.; limitations of view in, lxxii; some ruling ideas in, lxxiii f.; relation to N. T., lxix ff., lxxv
Onias III, 227
Ophir, 250
oral tradition, xxxi; importance attached to, 236, 466
Oreb, 502
Origen, liv
Ovid quoted, 228, 324

parable, 269
parallelism, xlv ff.
Pashhur, 307
'Passion Psalms,' lxi f., 398
Passover, Psalms for, 360, 365
penitence, language of, framed by the Psalter, 287
penitential Psalms, 287
Pentecost, Psalm for, 372
Perowne, Bp, quoted, 290, 326, 352, 368, 499, 523, &c.
Peschito, liv
Petrie quoted, 467
Philistines, 342, 501
Pirqē Abōth quoted, 434
plagues, the, 463
praises, as a name for the Psalms, xiv, 263
Prayer Book Version, lvi; renderings explained, 251, 312, 317, 324, 380, 392, 404, 412, 420, 422, 459, 492, 508, 520, &c.
prayers, as a name for the Psalms, xiv, 424, 515
prevent, 335, 481, 529
priests, 490
Proper Psalms, 262, 259, 321, 378, 511, 524, 531
Propertius quoted, 275
prophecy, connexion of Psalms with, x, 276, 325, 428; cessation of, 445; 'double sense' of, lxiv f. See *Messianic Hope*
prosperity of the wicked, problem of the, 268 ff., 298, 431
psalm, xiii
Psalms, Book of, general characteristics, ix; relation to other books of O. T., x; historical importance, xi; critical study, xi; devotional use, xi; position in O. T., xii; names, xiii; numbering, xiv; division into books, xvi; middle verse and line of, 472; collection and growth, xxxix; steps in formation, xliii; date of collection, xliii; previous collections, xliv; Messianic Hope in, lviii ff.; theology of, lxvii ff.
Psalms, titles of, xvii ff.; oral transmission of, xxxi; adapted and altered, xxxi; authorship and age of, xxxi ff.; arrangement, xliv; alphabetic or acrostic, xlviii; poetical form of, xliv; strophical arrangement, xlvii; imprecatory, lxx ff., 398 ff.; supposed to be written in the name of the nation, 286, 316, 409, 523; secondary, 409, 514; repeated, 300, 407
Psalms of Solomon, xxxvii
psalter, xiv. See *Psalms, Book of*
psaltery, 490
purpose, Heb. idea of Divine, 290

Qri, li, 335, 414, 461, 462, 536, &c.
quick=alive, 312
quotations from Psalms in N.T., 547 ff.

Rahab = Egypt, 521, 534
registers of citizens, 406, 522
Rehoboam, 531
reins, 437
rejoicing at the punishment of the wicked, lxx ff., 298, 306, 330
Rephidim, 468
resurrection, hope of in O.T., lxxvi f., 273
retribution, desire for in the O.T., lxxiii ff., 298, 315, 330
return from Babylon, 366, 375 ff.; its significance, 377
Reuben, 384
Revised Version, lvii, and notes *passim*
Riehm quoted, 243
righteousness, of God, see *God*; of man, 247, 513
Robinson quoted, 241
Rosenmüller quoted, 452

sacred mountain of Asiatic mythology, 264
sacrifice, lxviii; prophetic view of, 276; the sanction of the covenant, 279; victims offered in, 371, 406; spiritual, 281, 294; various terms for, 295
saints, 279, 512, 544
Salem, 453
Salmon, 385
Sanday quoted, 235
Savonarola, 377
Schultz's O. T. Theology quoted, 348
Schürer quoted, 445
Scrivener quoted, 232, 493, &c.
Seba, 421
Sela, 343
Selah, xx
self-righteousness, supposed, lxix ff.; 372
Sennacherib, Psalms connected with deliverance of Jerusalem from, 253 ff.; 303, 360, 366, 372, 448 ff., 453 ff.
Septuagint, li ff.; its history, li; MSS. lii; value, liii; influence on P. B. V., lvi; readings of, 230, 246, 251, 258, 262, 267, 272, 278, 282, 314, 316, 323, 327, 328, 331, 335, 340, 361, 367, 387, 395, 411, 414, 419, 423, 433, 434, 439, 445, 449, 451, 454, 470, 490, 507, 508, 509, 513, 517, 527, &c. &c.
servant of Jehovah, 478, 518
shadow of death, 241
Shakespeare quoted, 297, 334, 355
Sheba, 421
Shechem, 341, 385
Shechinah, 443
Shemīnīth, xxiii
Sheol, 273
shield, a title of God, 336, 509; of kings, 262
Shiggaion, xix
Shiloh, destruction of, 477 f.
Shīr, xviii
Shoshannim, 245, 398, 484
Shushan-eduth, 339
sin, different words for, 288, 511; confessed and repented of, 289; punishment of, 481
sin and suffering, popular view of the relation of, lxx
Sinai, allusions to, 277, 382
Sisera, 502
slavery, Israelite view of, 239
Smith, G. A., quoted, 230
Smith, Robertson, quoted, 235, 236, 281, 321, 345, 383, 433, 442, 499, &c.
snail, 329
snake charmers, 328
Solomon, references to, 244, 416
Solomon, Psalms of, xxxvii
song, xviii
Songs of Degrees, xxv
sons of God, 534
soul, 229, 505, 353
Spirit of God, 292
Stanley quoted, 478, 486, 520, 535
Succoth, 341
Symmachus, liv, and notes *passim*
synagogues, 445
Syriac Version, liv, and notes *passim*

Taberah, 469
Tabernacles, Pss. for Feast of, 372, 489
table, 404
Tabor, 535
Talmud quoted, 242, 390
Targum, liii; Messianic references in, liv, 244, 346 f., 417, 543; quoted, 244, 248, 301, 346 f., 378, 380, 388, 417, 448, 488, 507, 509, 523, 526, 543, &c.
Tarshish, 265, 421
tell, 266
Temple, references to, lxviii; pilgrimages to, 362, 504; worship at, 228, 362; love for, 352, 504; place where God reveals Himself, 436; destruction of, 440; significance of the restored, 393
terrible things, 363
Theodotion, liv, and notes *passim*
Theology of the Psalms, lxvii ff.; relation to ordinances of worship, lxvii; alleged self-righteousness of the Psalmists, lxix f., 372; imprecatory Psalms, lxx ff.; future life, lxxv ff., 268 ff., 273 f., 431 f., 437 f., 526 ff.; view of death, 273 f., 526 ff.; destruction of the wicked why desired, lxxiii, 298
Theophany, description of a, 277 f.
Thomson quoted, 399, 503
timbrel, 490
Tisri, 489
titles of Psalms, xvii ff.; referring to character of poem, xvii; musical setting or performance, xix; instruments, xxii: pitch of music, xxii; melody, xxiii; liturgical use, xxiv; authorship, xxvi; occasion, xxvi; value of the titles, xxvi ff.

tongue, sins of the, 297, 359
Tristram quoted, 329, 356, 399, 404, 470, 487, 506, &c.
Trumpets, Feast of, 489
truth, 291, 513
Tyre, 501, 251

Uzziah, 268, 524

vale of tears, 507
vales, 365
Versions, Ancient, li ff., and notes *passim*
,, English, lv ff.
vindictiveness, apparent spirit of, lxx ff., 298, 306, 330
vine as emblem of Israel, 486
vinegar, 404
vintage songs, 321
Vulgate, lv, and notes *passim*

watches of the night, 355
wealth, impotence of, 267
week, Psalms for days of, xxiv
Westcott, Bp, quoted, 248, 505
'Wisdom' of Israel, x; Psalms connected with, 267 f., 432
wise, 271
wonders, 533
wondrous works of God, 413
Wright's Bible Word-Book quoted, 334, 480, &c.
Wycliffe quoted, 349

Yinnōn, 417

Zalmon, 385
Zalmunna, 502
Zebah, 502
Zebulun, tribe of, 392
Zechariah, prophecies of, 377, 510
Zech. ix—xi, 483
Zeeb, 502
Zion, the city of God, 256; the abode of Jehovah, 278; metropolis of the nations, 519
Ziphites, 304 f.
Zoan, 467

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